"X-RAYED BY LOVE OR THE DOUBLE OF THE CZAR," NEXT WEEK'S LEDGER

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THE ONE DARK STAIN.

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BY MAJOR THOMAS P. MONTFORT.

CHAPTER I.

Two men were seated on a boulder in a deep gorge in the Rocky Mountains. They had been tramping for hours and had stopped to rest.

"We have certainly struck it rich at last," one of them observed after a time. "Our fortunes are as good as made this time."

"That's what," the other agreed. "We have discovered a lead that is worth a hundred thousand, at the very least. We are rich men, Joe."

"We are, Jim. We are rich at last. But it has been a long, hard struggle. Ten years of going hungry and suffering for the necessaries of life. It has been a long, hard pull—a time that tried our souls."

"Yes, but all that don't matter now, Joe. If the struggle has been long the reward is great, and we can appreciate our good fortune all the more because of what it has cost us."

"That's right, Jim. So we will think of the future and let the past go. We are rich, we won't have to struggle any more, and that is enough."

There was a long silence, during which the two men sat gazing off at the mountain opposite them. They were deeply thoughtful, and the mind of each had traveled back across the arid plains, the rich prairies and the fertile valleys that stretched away for hundreds of miles to the east—away back to the blue-grass slopes of old Missouri, where the sun lay soft and warm on meadows and fields.

It was singular, but it was true, that for the first time in years there had come into their souls a longing for that distant land, and a yearning to see it once again. Back there was their old home, and now there suddenly crowded up from the recesses of their memories many fond associations that had long lain dormant.

There were the old homes and their surroundings, and, above all, there were the dear ones they had known and loved in the old days. They had not thought of these things much during their long struggle when misfortunes and hardships were their portion, but now that fortune had smiled on them their first thoughts were of the dear associations of the past.

"Jim," Joe spoke at last almost softly, "do you know what I am going to do the very first thing when I reach town?"

Jim looked around with a smile on his lips.

"I think I do," he answered. "You are going to write home to your wife."

Joe glanced quickly up, and there was a look of surprise on his face.

"How did you guess it so easily?" he asked. "You haven't turned mind-reader, have you?"

"I knew what was in your thoughts, Joe, because I had been thinking the same things. I knew your mind as well as my own, had now gone back to the old home."

"Yes, you are right, Jim, it had. But doesn't it seem queer that our thoughts should turn that way all at once, when for years we have not felt that longing for those we love?"

"Well, yes. But, still, I don't know. You see, while we had nothing but hardships we were willing to bear them alone; but now when riches are ours we want those we love to share them with us. After all, it is quite natural, I guess."

"Yes, I reckon it is. Anyhow, I am going to write to my wife and have her come out here at once. Ten years is a long time for us to have been apart, and I want to see her."

"I have no wife, you know," Jim said, "but there is one back there who is very dear to me, and I am going to write to her as soon as I reach town and ask her to come to me. She is a dear girl, and she thinks the world of me, and I know she is anxious to come. She and I are going to be the happiest people living."

"Except my wife and myself," Joe corrected.

There was another long silence, then Joe spoke again, but to a different purpose.

"We must not say a word about our discovery when we reach town. There are plenty of people who would jump the claim in a minute, if they knew about it. We must keep mum till we get everything safely fixed, and until we get money in our hands so that we can return and develop the mine."

"Certainly, Joe. I understand all that. I hope, though, there won't be any trouble about the money."

"There won't be. You need have no uneasiness on that score. As I told you, I have two hundred dollars in Doctor Jenson's hands. I gave it to him to hold for me, and all I have to do is to ask for it, and he will hand it to me. That money is just the same as though I had it in my hands."

"You seem to have great confidence in Jenson," Jim observed. "I don't know that there is anybody I could trust quite so implicitly as you do him."

"If you knew Doctor Jenson as well as I do you would trust him just as far." Joe replied. "He is a man who would sacrifice his right arm before he would do a dishonest act. If I had a million dollars I would not be afraid to trust the last cent of it to his keeping without a particle of security or a scratch of a pen. He is the best man I ever knew—a man above reproach in every way."

"If you say he is all that I have no reason to doubt it. So long as there is no hitch in getting hold of the money, so we

can go ahead with the development of our claim, I shall be satisfied. I guess we had better be moving on. It is getting late."

"That's a fact. We have a long walk ahead of us yet, and I'd like to get in before night if we can."

They both arose and stood for a little while looking down the grave.

"I am pretty stiff in the joints," Jim observed. "I am feeling as stove up as an old plow-horse."

"And so am I," Joe agreed. "It is no short walk from Hungry Flat down here."

"And especially over such a rugged way."

They moved slowly on their way down the gorge and the minutes later they had passed around a turn.

Then another man emerged from the bushes, directly behind where they had been sitting, and stood looking down the grave at the spot they had gone. Presently he chuckled softly and said to himself:

"A rich claim in Hungry Flat. Well, we'll see who gets it. We'll also see whether Jonas Boggess can be deprived of his home over their money. My opinion is, somebody is going to be disappointed."

CHAPTER II.

A man was seated alone at a table in a restaurant at Georgetown. He was a man who would attract more than ordinary attention, and a stranger would pause to look at him a second time.

He was a well-built man, with a carriage and bearing that denoted a strong mind. His head was beautiful eyes, and his face wore a composite expression of love and gentleness and sadness and worry. He was one of those handsome men that were drawn to him unconsciously.

Presently a waiter approached the table and touched the one who was seated there, on the shoulder. He looked up quickly, then his face paled and his eyes grew troubled.

"What do you here again?" he said.

"Yes, I'm here again, Doctor—er—Jenson," the other replied, "and could not help near speaking that other name."

"So-ho!" the Doctor hastily admonished. "Then you must be added: 'What do you come here for? You can not want anything of me now.'"

"I want to speak with you for a moment in private, if the other can spare me. I suppose you won't refuse me so small a favor?"

The Doctor sighed.

"What do you greater favor," he said. "I suppose I shall have to do as you say, whether I want to or not."

"No, you don't. You can use your own pleasure in the matter. I demand nothing. I only request."

"Oh, well, it is all the same. I can accede to your request, I suppose. I shall see you, of course. Where do you want me to come?"

"To the place we met the last time. I shall go there at once. I hope you won't keep me waiting."

"I shall be there directly."

The man left the room, and presently the Doctor arose and followed him. The latter waited down the street, and came up a dark alley, approached an old tumble-down building that was out of use. There was a rickety flight of stairs leading to the second floor, and up these the Doctor cautiously felt his way. He walked down a dark hall and tapped on a door.

"Come right in," a voice called.

The Doctor opened the door and stepped into the room. There was a dim light, and seated on an old barrel was the man who had come to the restaurant. He looked up with a smile.

"You are very prompt, Doctor," he said. "I am glad you are, too, for I hate to be kept waiting. Won't you be seated? There is a box over there."

"No, thank you," the Doctor replied. "I prefer to stand. I may have to be off as possible. If you have any business with me please state it at once."

The other looked silently at the Doctor for a moment while a grin spread over his face. At last he said:

"I should think it is scarcely necessary for me to state the nature of my business with you. You should be able by this time to form a correct conclusion in regard to that without any explanation from me."

"I suppose so. And yet you surely do not mean to try to extort money from me?"

"Not extort it, no. However, I am in sore need of a little money just now—say about two hundred dollars—and I was going to ask you to be so good as to advance it to me. I hope you won't refuse my request."

"You demand, not request," the Doctor said.

"Not at all, Doctor. I demand nothing. I simply request."

The Doctor shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"Be here, Boggess," he said. "What's the use of mincing matters. The plain truth is you have got me completely in your power, just as you have done a hundred times already. You may name what you please, but that is all there is to it."

Boggess smiled and shook his head.

"You are mistaken, Doctor," he replied. "You know I have never demanded money of you. Several times I have been in need of a little financial assistance I have applied to you for it, and you have always been so generous that I have never been disappointed. I thought perhaps you would not find it in your heart to refuse me this time."

"And if I did refuse you?" the Doctor questioned.

"Well, I should be very sorry, of course. But, still, it would not inconvenience me so very much. There are other fish in the sea, you know, by which I can get money."

"And those other fish are all right, though. He is a stranger in town—only been here a few days. He is not half as hanging around the saloons most of the time. Besides he is flush of money just now, and don't know much more than the law allows. He can be trusted to do as we direct. Everything is going better, and I guess anything will go with him so long as he can get another place to show off his wife.

"I hope you are right, Martin, and I suppose you are. Well, let's be moving."

Martin arose, and the two left the cavalcade passed on up the trail. The other men and the two Boggesses and Boggess and Martin brought up the rear.

"You haven't said much about this expedition," Martin said after a time, "what it's for and where it's bound, and all that."

"I guess you were going to locate and work a rich claim in Hungry Flat," Boggess replied.

"Oh, but that is rather indefinite. Where is that vein, and how do you happen to know about it?" You haven't been out prospecting lately."

"I didn't have to prospect. It is easier to let somebody else do it."

"You mean we are going to jump a find?"

"That is about what I mean."

Martin stopped short still and looked Boggess over from head to foot. Finally he said:

"Look here! Don't you know what that implies in this country?" he asked.

Boggess laughed.

"I know that in this case," he replied, "it means a rich claim."

"It means something different from that, Boggess, and you know different."

"Does it? What?"

"It means that we will dance in the air with a rope about our necks. They have a lynch law out in this country, and that law says that jumpers must hang."

"That's all right. But there is a saying, ancient but true, that fortune favors the brave. Come before hanging. You recall that old saying, don't you?"

"Yes, but the way may not be difficult."

"In this instance it will. At least, it will be difficult for you, who have already jumped a claim. In fact, in a legal sense, we are going to jump it for you."

"Oh, all right, you!"

"Certainly. Yesterday, up the gorge here, I found a rich claim. They had made a find, a rich discovery in Hungry Flat, they said, and were going to get money to take out location papers and develop the claim. It is not theirs legally till they do that, unless they have grown familiar with it. When it comes to swearing, five witnesses are better than three, and more positive."

"But they will get their money and come right back."

"Will they? I don't think so. I have fixed that little matter, I judge."

"How?"

"I got the money myself."

"Their money?"

"Surely. That is the richest part of the joke. We are using their own money to beat them with, and rob them of it."

Martin was rather thick-headed and it took him a little time to see how things were, but at last he stopped and looking at Boggess admiringly exclaimed:

"I guess it is so. When anybody gets ahead of you wake me up and tell me about it. With your head you ought to be a great trust magnate."

"Instead of an ordinary cheap villain, eh?"

"You certainly ought."

"Well, when I get rich out of this mine we are going to work I may branch out into something larger. You may be able to do the villain act on a large scale, too."

"Me? Oh, I couldn't be anything but honest, even if I tried."

The Doctor made no reply, but counted out the money. Boggess as quietly took it up and put it in his pocket. Then the two men looked at each other for a moment in perfect silence, after which Boggess turned to leave the room.

"Wait a moment," the Doctor said. "I want an understanding with you."

"What is it?" Boggess replied, and waited expectantly.

"I want to know" the Doctor resumed, "how long this blackmailing is to continue. I want to be rid of it now."

"I don't see why you should call it blackmailing," Boggess answered. "You are free to give me what you will, just as you choose. But no matter. As to how it may last, that is hard to say. I am in need of a little financial aid I shall always be glad to avail myself of your generosity. It may last a good while—years, perhaps."

The Doctor came close to Boggess and looked him steadily in the eyes.

"Boggess," he said, "if that is really your name, this thing must end, but I doubt it. I have learned some things about you that you wouldn't want the world to know, and I am going to learn more. Take care that the worm don't turn. That is all."

Boggess smiled, but at the same time there was a startled look in his eyes and his face grew deathly pale.

CHAPTER III.

Out on a lonely mountain trail, a short distance from Hungry Flat, a solitary horseman ambled and a heavy darkness lay over the country.

Presently from down the trail, toward town, there came the sound of many feet. The horseman stood up and listened, and then after a moment muttered:

"Boggess and party. I began to think they would never get started."

He sat down and four men and two heavily laden burros drew up to where the man stood, and came to a halt.

"You, Boggess?" the man said. "I did you?" the man growled.

"No doubt, but we could, Boggess," one of the men replied. "It took time th get things in shape. It took trouble getting the men. I am sorry you had to wait so long, but it couldn't be helped."

"Ah, for your sake, Keith. That is all right. I see you have two men there that are not strangers. Hello, Martin! Here is that other. He is a stranger to me. Do you know anything about him?"

"Not much. He is all right, though. He is a stranger in town—only been here a few days. He is not half as hanging around the saloons most of the time. Besides he is flush of money just now, and don't know much more than the law allows. He can be trusted to do as we direct. Everything is going better, and I guess anything will go with him so long as he can get another place to show off his wife.

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"Me? Oh, I couldn't be anything but honest, even if I tried."

"Couldn't you? I think I know better than that."

Martin showed a little alarm.

"I guess you don't know much of anything about me at all," he said.

"Don't I?" Boggess replied. "Perhaps not. Still, how about that escape from a Kentucky lynch law? Eh? I wonder if I really heard something of that, or did I merely dream it? Come to think of it, I guess it was only a dream."

Martin made no reply, but walked on in silence with his head bent. There was a long pause, then Boggess added:

"I guess you and I are going to get along well together, Martin, and that you are not going to be so foolish as to oppose me in anything. Don't you feel that way about it?"

"I reckon I do," Martin replied, and at the same time he gave Boggess a look that was not as submissive as that worthy could have desired. "Yes, I reckon we are going to get along all right. I don't know any reason why we should not. When little birds in their nest agree,' you know."

"Yes, and 'when birds of a feather flock together.' A beautiful thing, that, isn't it, Martin?"

"Very."

Just after daylight the party came to a halt, at the side of a mountain stream, to rest and prepare some breakfast. The men had brought Boggess for some distance on their journey in their destination, but he refused to tell them anything.

"Tell you? Tell me at so much per day?" he said, "and the only thing of interest to you will be when we arrive at our destination you will know it."

Nothing more was said on the subject, and the party, as it became more and more from the pace changed a quick pace, and the latter part of the journey was a perceptible nod.

CHAPTER IV.

Doctor Jenson walked down the main street of Georgetown on the way to his office. For every one he met he had a cheerful word, and when every one he received a pleasant word and a smile in return.

He was a man whom all men were talking together, and when he was out of hearing one of them said to the other:

"Is it that distinguished looking man?"

"You are certainly a stranger here," the other replied. "That is Doctor Jenson."

"Indeed. But he is a man one would remember a long time. I like his looks."

His looks didn't belie him in the least. He is a man whom all men everybody likes. He has more friends than any one else in the world, and I don't believe he has an enemy in the world."

"That's saying a good deal."

"It is, but it is more than the truth. And why shouldn't he have friends when he is constantly doing good to every one? He has practiced medicine here for years, and I don't believe he has ever failed to answer a call, even when he knows he would never get a cent of pay. He goes to the poorest and the most worthless just as quick as he goes to the rich. It seems to be all one to him. Everybody is the same to him."

"Poor people ought to love him, then."

"They do. They just adore him. Whatever Doctor Jenson says or does is law and gospel with them."

"He certainly should be a happy man."

"He is, naturally. With the love and respect of the whole community and the certainty of no one on earth, there is no reason why he should not be happy."

If the community and the Doctor Jenson a few minutes later in his own office they would have been no sure of his happiness. They would have realized how little he knew of the inner life of a man, and how completely some people can hide an aching heart and a sorely troubled head behind a smiling face and a smiling face.

Seated at his desk, with his face resting in his hands, the Doctor presented anything but a happy appearance, and a world-wide trouble had come to his face that none of his acquaintances had ever seen there before, and that pained him. During many long years he had practiced the art of putting on a smile, though when he had been alone with his own thoughts and had lived over again some of the scenes of his past life.

A long time the Doctor sat there, silent-stepped and motionless, then he arose and began to pace the floor. For a few minutes he kept this up, but at last he stopped before a mirror on the wall and he muttered:

"I must be blotting out the past—no living down a sin—no atoning for a wrong? Must a man suffer all his days for a crime committed in the heat of passion? Does God demand an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life? It seems so!"

He stepped short, for there was a sound of footsteps on the walk. Summoning a smile to his lips and a pleasant expression to his face, he returned to his desk and sat down. Presently there was a knock and the man came into the room. With a hearty welcome the Doctor sprang up and advanced to meet them.

"Joe Manley!" he cried. "The last person I would have expected to see! Why, where have you been? I have not seen nor heard from you for a year!"

"Oh! I have been sort of knocking about in the mountains," Joe replied. "How are you, Doctor? You look to be well and hearty."

"All right. As good as I deserve, I presume. There is it with you? Struck a fortune yet?"

"I just have, Doctor. My partner here, Jim Hunter, and I have discovered a lead that is going to make us both rich."

The Doctor looked pleased, and he was. Joe was one of his best friends and he was glad of his success. He told Joe as much.

"We are down here now," Joe went on, "to make arrangements for developing the claim. We want to get some supplies and tools, and things. We are going back in a day or two to begin work."

"I see." the Doctor replied absently, and for a moment a shadow of trouble flashed across his face.

"And, Doctor," Joe added, "we are going

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Not a cent in advance—not a penny, remember, until you yourself, can freely and unhesitatingly say, I am entirely well.

Should you begin the treatment, I will let your Banker or Express Agent hold the money.

Will you under such conditions, to be complete, be and entirely free from Rheumatism, pain and misery? That is what I now promise Rheumatics. I have positive, unwavering faith in my Dr. Shoop's Rheumatic Remedy but feel no tasks and follow-ups anywhere, have ever before said, "I will Cure Rheumatism. We make this offer now:

I want to see—and much in some ways prefer—that you get entirely well before you pay anything under any circumstances. I want you to know about this unwavering prescription. The remedy is surely trustworthy—else my good name and all my brought nearly, in America, whether located in hands of over 50,000 users. I want new Doubly selling as it does. Dr. Shoop's Rheumatic Remedy.

And yet, strange to say, not one druggist in a hundred, even knows as yet of the remedy and he never to battle against pain. To stir, awaken those unknowing ones, to spread the knowledge of what this compound can do, I shall boldly publish this offer, these facts, unrestricted and unlimited. Having no fear of the final outcome. I shall unhesitatingly tell of my plan to all.

Reader, you that are well and happy, do an act of humanity. Tell any friend sick and suffering one that there is yet one way to health—one way entirely free from risk, or of expense.

For a complete cure I charge but $10. If that strike a fair, honest dollar with me, I feel that money will be cured with a bottle or two of my remedy. But chronic cases, of course, and those difficult cases, may require ten, twenty or even a dozen bottles. In fact, no one who has seriously suffered the pangs of real Rheumatism, will hesitate to pay $10 for relief, price when cured, because perhaps, two bottles or three bottles are needed in that particular case.

But to you who have "Pay" privileges. You must write me personally. Simply address Dr. Shoop, Centered R, Racine, Wis., Box 5703.

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Which book shall I send you?

Book 1 on Dyspepsia, Book 3 the Kidneys,
Book 2 on the Heart, Book 4 For Women.

Remember, for Rheumatism use

Dr. Shoop's Rheumatic Remedy

to need a little money, so I thought if you could let me have that two hundred dollars it would fix us up all right."

The blow had fallen—a blow the Doctor had felt was coming. He sank back in his chair, his face deadly pale. But his agitation was only for an instant. He was a strong man with uncommon will power, and by a supreme exertion of his will he recovered his usual calm manner.

"All right, Joe," he replied. "I haven't the money here, and I must ask you to wait until tomorrow. Will that do?"

"Well, I suppose so," Joe answered, "but we ought to be getting things shaped up as soon as possible. Delays are dangerous with us just now."

The Doctor sat silent, apparently in deep thought, and Joe, who was watching him, saw an expression come to his face that was very like despair. Presently in weary tones he said:

"I am sorry, Joe, but I am afraid I can't get the money today. I must ask you to wait until tomorrow."

Joe saw there was something back of the Doctor's conduct, and he knew that his demand for the money that day was a most inopportune time. Wishing to be as lenient as possible he said:

"All right, Doctor; tomorrow will do."

"Very well, then," the Doctor replied, "Come up tomorrow morning."

They said nothing more about the money, but they chatted for some time about various things, recalling past incidents and reviewing old memories. At last the Doctor asked about the find of gold, and Joe, cheerfully to speak of that said:

"Jim and I have been trying for a long time to make a strike, and had become pretty thoroughly discouraged, for we had experienced some mighty rough sledding. We kept on, though, and at last we run across the lead, and I tell you, it is a humdinger. It is good for a hundred thousand any day, and maybe a whole lot more. We are going to be rich, Doctor, and we are going to begin to live. I have already written to my wife and told her to come out at once, and Jim here has written the same thing to the woman who is going to be his wife. They will soon be here, both of them, and we are surely counting on having a great time. Jim has got millions, and that is the biggest event in a man's life, you know, and having my wife with me will be next to just about the same as getting married. You don't know what it means to a man, Doctor, after all these long years of waiting. You can't understand it. We will be a couple of the craziest fools on earth, I reckon, when we get those women out here, but likewise we'll be the happiest. And it all comes about because we have struck a rich mine at last."

Joe became almost wildly enthusiastic in his childish joy, but the Doctor felt that every word was like a poisoned arrow that was being driven into his own heart. It would be impossible to describe the varying emotions he underwent as he sat there and listened. There was sympathy, pity, terror and despair in his heart, and above all there was a feeling of dread which made his soul sick.

Long after Joe and Jim had gone he sat there and thought, and with each moment his heart grew heavier and dread and fear of the coming day on him. At last he arose and began to pace the floor, and in his mind was a bitter thought.

"I will do no thing to do," he mused, "but it is the best way out. Those men will have the gold, and their great happiness will go with it, and I shall be the cause of it all. That villain will turn them out of their claim, and with Joe's own money. I see it all now. He will steal their mine, and I have helped him. When Joe knows this of what will he think of me? He will look upon me as a base coward, who has sold him out, and he will never know what terrible pressure was brought on me to make me do as I did. If he knew he would pity rather than condemn, but I dare not tell him."

He paused a moment, then added:

"No, I dare not tell him, and have not the courage to ever meet him again. There is but one way out of it all, and that will come sooner or later. I may as well end it now, and have it over with."

He opened a drawer and took out a pistol. He turned the weapon in his hand and looked it over, and a cold shiver ran over him.

"It seems a hard thing to do," he mused, "but it is best."

CHAPTER V.

The Doctor was still holding the pistol in his hand and looking at it as if fascinated by it when there came the sound of footsteps on the stairs again. He hastily opened the drawer and thrust the weapon into it, saying to himself:

"I will wait. There is plenty of time."

There was a timid knock at the door, and in answer to his invitation to "come in" the door opened and a woman and two little children entered. They were neat and clean, but poorly dressed, a sure indication that they were not wealthy, but were nevertheless respectable.

The children, a little girl not more than five years old, and a boy of three, ran to the Doctor and climbed into his lap and made free with him. He drew them both to him and kissed them, and patted them, and to all appearances was as free from care or trouble as they were.

The woman stood for a moment looking on with a smile, then she said:

"Why don't you make them get away, Doctor? I know they annoy you."

"Let them alone," he replied. "Let them enjoy life while they can."

He paused, and presently, drawing a deep sigh, he added:

"If nobody annoyed me any more than they do I would be the happiest man in the world. But——"

He stopped short, and, turning to the woman, said:

"What can I do for you, Mrs. Grayson? Anybody sick?"

The woman looked down and blushed. After hesitating a moment she said:

"George is having trouble with his ankle again. I am ashamed to say it, Doctor, but he still owes you a cent of pay, but I came to ask if you wouldn't try to help him once more."

"Why, of course I do. Been using his foot too soon? I told him not to try to do any work for a month. Let me see it."

The woman was more embarrassed than ever. She hesitated, but finally said:

"You have a right to know the truth, Doctor, and I am going to tell you. George has been at work on the new building for him now, but I thought it would be fair for you to let you know the truth."

If the Doctor was annoyed he did not show it. With a sympathetic smile he said:

"That's all right, Mrs. Grayson. George should have been more careful, but since he hasn't I will see what I can do for him. We must not be too strict in our requirements with poor people like others, and we must not find too much fault with their shortcomings. We all have our failings, and some of us are much worse than George. I will be right over to see him."

The woman looked her gratitude, but yet she felt that she must voice it, too.

"Indeed, Doctor," she said, "have no faults nor weaknesses. I don't know how we could get along if we didn't have kindnesses, nor what we should all do without you."

For a moment his face darkened while he slowly shook his head. More impressive, too, was the expression of despair in his eyes as he replied:

"Mrs. Grayson, no one knows the secrets that lie buried in every bosom. Nobody is aware of all that lies hidden from public view in the heart of their great sympathy. All the deep tragedies that are often concealed by smiling faces are known to all but only our faults and our weaknesses, and often the one we think most nearly perfect has a secret sin or stain on his soul. Drunkenness is a sin, but there are other sins far worse. Nobody knows how many blighted souls there are in the world, and we little suspect how many there are right around us. Be——"

He stopped suddenly and whirled about to his desk, and taking up a pen began to write. Mr. Grayson hesitated for a moment, then calling the children to her began moving toward the door. The Doctor looked up and said:

"I will be right over, Mrs. Grayson. Thank you for coming. Good morning."

When the door had closed after his visitors and he was again alone, the old troubled expression came back to his face and the look of dread and despair was once more in his eyes.

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When a BOY needs MONEY

He opened the drawer and took up the pistol, and holding it in one hand, while he rested his head on the other, he mused:

"If they had not come I would all have been over now, and I would be free and at peace. Now I must end it all in a moment, but I must not. I promised her I would come, and I have given my promise. Grayson is a worthless devil, but he needs me. I will go to him. There will be time enough after that."

He put the pistol away again, but he made no movement toward going. Instead he sat for a few minutes as if in deep thought, then opening another drawer he took therefrom a picture, which he set on his desk in front of him. It was a photograph of a woman, tall and beautiful, with a smiling, happy face, and eyes that spoke of gentleness and love. For a long time he gazed at this picture, and then taking it up he placed it to his lips and kissed it fervently.

"Heart of my heart and soul of my soul," he murmured. "The one woman in all the world—the one ray of sunshine in all my dark, troubled life. If I were a free man, a man with a clear past, how happy I could be with your sweet companionship and dear love. I would ask for nothing more, for that would be the limit of bliss. It would be Heaven itself."

Then he fell to thinking of the past—of the first time he had met this woman, and of all his meetings and assectations with her since. He recalled that the first time he had seen this woman he had come to his office—just as that other one had, asking him to call and see a sick husband. He remembered that at his first sight of her she had made a deep impression on him, and that he had felt toward her as he had never felt toward any other woman. Three years had passed, but still he remembered every word she had spoken, every movement she had made and the color in her face.

In the days that followed he met her often, and at last one day he awoke to a knowledge that he loved and adored him. She was the wife of another man, yet he could not help it. He knew it was wrong and a great sin, but he could not help it. Love had come unbidden, and in spite of his efforts to drive it out of his soul it remained.

Then later he experienced another awakening. He discovered that he did not love alone, but that he held in her heart the same love that he felt for him, and that to him this—she did not intentionally let him know it—but on the contrary she tried to hide it from him—was a source of power. Yet for two years Doctor Jenson treated her husband with the same care and devotion he had bestowed upon any other one patient.

He knew of her love and she knew of his, yet never a word passed, but of that knowledge passed between them.

Her husband was a worthless drunkard, whom she had been forced to support all her married life. Worse yet, he was cruel and brutal to her. Many times during his living was no benefit to anybody—his death would have opened the way for them at last to have gained their greatest happiness. Yet, for two years Doctor Jenson treated him with all his skill and power to save, possessed—treated him without price—brought to bedside after bedside from which he arose.

And now that man was dead, and the woman was free. She had a right to give her hand where her heart and soul had been given long before. She was free to voice her love, as the Doctor had voiced his, and free to become the wife of a man who would shield and protect her.

Looking at her picture the Doctor thought of all this, and in his fancy he saw a quiet little home made beautiful by her presence—a home, unpretentious, but made fragrant with the bloom of flowers, and glorified into a little Heaven by the sweet content of a pure and perfect love. He smiled as he drew this picture, and for a little while he was lost to earth and was happy. But it was only for a moment.

Suddenly he awoke from his dream and came back to the cold realities of life. He shook his head and sighed.

"It can never be," he mused; "never in this life." He paused an instant then added: "It seems hard that one sin should haunt a man all his life—haunt him to his death. But it seems there is no atonement."

This dramatic story will be continued in next week's Ledger, presenting the readers with some very startling episodes and situations. You are invited to ascertain how this drama will terminate. Read the next installment. Its perusal to the end will highly reward you. If you are not a subscriber to the Ledger you are hereby advised to send in the price of a subscription at once. If you do so, we will be glad to send you free one of our King Cameras or any six patterns you may select from our pattern page. See our advertisements on pages thirteen and fifteen.

Failure of Contract.

Bishop Wilmer of Alabama, was once asked by a couple to perform the marriage ceremony. He had previously refused to undertake the service of the Episcopal church, joining together two loving hearts and dusky hands in the holy state of matrimony, and the blessed them as they knelt at the chancel rail. When they arose, the groom paused for an instant as if in the expectation of something further, then turned and hurried up the aisle.

"Hold, John, wait a moment," cried the bishop, "where is the fee?"

"Fee, me, bishop," replied the groom, with deep disappointment in his tone, "but you said you would marry us for nothing."

"Not carried out the contract! What do you mean, you scamp? I will marry you for it just like white folks and I have done it word for word," cried the justly indignant bishop.

"Dere's one thing you've left out, sir," persisted the groom.

"And what is that, pray?"

"Why, bishop, sir, dat you ain't salute de bride!"

For a minute the bishop was stunned; then a broad light of merriment shone over his face, and he cried, "All right, John, I'll salute the bride, for if you just keep it—and I wish you much joy!"

Perhaps It Cured Him.

Capt. Mark Cusio was being congratulated on his gift of a baby boy. Cartwright hero fund for bravery in the wreck of the Ocean Queen was present.

"The gift was unexpected," said Capt. Cusio with a modest smile. "It was an unexpected gift, though by no means unpleasant, as the retort that a wife made to her husband when he awoke at 3 o'clock in the morning.

"He had come home very quietly. In fact, he took off his shoes on the front doorsteps. Then he unlocked the door and moved quietly up the stairs, making no light, holding his breath.

"But the light was streaming through the keyhole of the door of the bedroom. With a sigh he paused. Then he opened the door and entered.

"His wife stood by the bureau fully dressed.

"'I didn't expect you'd be sitting up for me, my dear,' he said.

"'I haven't been,' she said. 'I just came in myself.'"

A Letter From School.

They were talking about boarding schools, and a lawyer took a letter from his pocket.

"My son," he said, "started in at a new boarding school last week, and here is a letter that I got from him this morning."

The letter was passed about. It ran:

"Dear Pa: I think I have got appendicetis. The boys at the school are not very nice, but I will try not to learn any bad habbits. I do not think the food is good, but I would not mind if I was a little strongger.

"The piece of meat enclosed is what we had on Sunday, but on other days it is tuffer. Do not mind my being so uncomfortable, as I do not think I will last long. Please send me a dollar as I owe a boy a dollar. Your wretched son,

JOHN."

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By CONSTANCE BEATRICE WILLARD.

A HUSBAND'S SIN; OR, THE LURE OF LOVE.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE VOICE OF RESOLUTION.

Many days had elapsed since the Indian Princess had made her mad resolve to avenge herself for the fancied insult, and yet she had made little progress. To be sure she managed to fan into the husband's heart against the little wife more than once, but that was but momentarily, especially as the latter's gentleness overrode all harshness. The dark-skinned woman fairly gnashed her teeth with rage as she saw Love, young and inexperienced as she was, rise in popularity, while she was made to feel that it was only her great wealth that kept her within the ranks of her friends.

Vance Wizzard saw this more than any one else, and as he had long loved her decorously, he at last felt that perhaps when she was smarting from the slights of the world, she might turn towards him, so upon the morning of the day of the accident at the Madison Square Gardens, he wrote and asked her to permit him to call before lunch as he wanted to have a few moments' conversation with her.

Dahlia accorded him permission, and when he was announced, swept into the room in a magnificently fitting cloth costume of the shade known by her name. Her wonderful hair was piled upon her head, and she was the used to revel in barbaric splendor of jewels, was without one. Even her slim hands were bare.

Holding one of the latter for a moment in his own warm ones, Vance said quickly, coming at once to the point:

"Dahlia, let me put it right off. You are magnificent, and I love you."

Her black brows rose slowly, then she motioned him to a chair.

"That's awfully good of you to listen to me," he said joyously, seating himself, and leaning forward a little, his elbow resting on his knee, "even if I smoke?" shifting his position to take out his cigarette case.

The dark face flamed. Hitherto the men of her intimate set were welcome to smoke in her presence. Sometimes she smoked with them, tiny perfumed affairs, which she had imported for herself.

"No! no, not at once," suddenly that he jumped and almost dropped his case.

"What is it?" the young man asked, looking up, his eyes somewhat amazed.

"I say you cannot smoke in my presence when you could not do it when that doubtful en girl happens to be."

Vance's eyebrows went up in their turn, as he used in a curious voice:

"Do you mean Mrs. Clayton?"

"I most certainly do."

"Well what has she to do with my smoking with you?"

The head of the woman with royal blood in her veins was thrown back, much as probably her great-great-great chief's had often poised, and she glared down at him.

"Now, see here," Vance said quietly, startled at her anger, but attributing it to a woman's fancies, "sit down like a good girl. Of course I will not smoke, and I beg your pardon for mentioning the matter. My excuse is that I thought you had no objection. Come," and his face was very winning.

At this moment came the crisis in that poor, deluded woman's life. Had she listened to him, screened his clean, honorable love, and crushed out of her life the false, wicked passion which was consuming her, she could have become honored as his wife and grown to love him dearly. She hesitated, her face still flushed, her nerves all trembling, then there came before her the sweet, tender, fair face of Stephen Clayton's wife, with its delicate colorings, blue eyes and golden hair. All her good impulses fled, leaving nothing but hatred, deadly and terrible, and her resolve to win Stephen away from Love.

"Will you tell me why you are willing to give her courtesy you do not accord me?" she asked in a low voice.

"What? Not smoke with her? Why just because, my dear girl, she does not like to have us, I suppose."

"You told you so?"

"I don't know, perhaps I just intuitively picked it up, but, my dear Dahlia, let that drop and listen to me. I don't care a hang about smoking, either with you or Mrs. Clayton, and I do want to tell you how much I love you," and he stretched out his hands.

The wealthy woman had been asked in marriage so many times that already she had forgotten the names of some, but no one had given an directly to the point, or by his own quiet manliness shown how thoroughly in earnest he was. Vance Wizzard of the old family, and wealthy in his own right need to woo a woman for her fortune, and she knew it. He had never, since he preferred Stephen Clayton, but when Stephen had brought a bride among them, the young man had been many times that and he was, and perhaps she might had it not been for her own folly, have been set ablaze by his innocent remarks of the childish wife.

"You asked me to smoke with you," Dahlia asked quietly. "But have you weighed matters fully? Do you remember that other lady who has used that word, and—"

"Nonsense!"

"No, the truth. I am neither black nor red, but a mixture of both. My parents showed you that when they first met you because they were first cousins, it has come out in me. Until within the past few weeks I have thought it was only in the skin that I showed my Indian blood, but now I know that there is more within me than there, and she looked like some wild creature.

"Hush, stop this nonsense, Dahlia!" cried the young man, exceedingly pale, facing her, resolved to win her and to forever stamp out these terrible ideas.

"Ah, there is much more in my veins. I have all the Indian wealth, his treachery and his vindictiveness. I can camp upon a trail, if needs be, through the remainder of my days, and I get my revenge. Vance Wizzard, until I came face to face with that white woman, I never realized there was any difference. I know now, and by the time I have wrecked her home, trailed her golden hair there under my heel, and to forever stamp out these terrible ideas.

"Ah, there is much more in my veins. I have all the Indian wealth, his treachery and his vindictiveness. I can camp upon a trail, if needs be, through the remainder of my days, and I get my revenge. Vance Wizzard, until I came face to face with that white woman, I never realized there was any difference. I know now, and by the time I have wrecked her home, trailed her golden hair there under my heel, and to forever stamp out these terrible ideas.

As Vance looked at her, he felt his blood grow cold, his anger changed and the one thing he flooded her face with blood, that no Indian on the warpath had a more implacable enemy than this white woman had dislodged her hairpins, and her long hair fell about her, and her burning eyes, its high cheek-bones. Even the lithe figure changed, for as she uttered her last words she drew herself upward, and darted about her as though they were a blanket, which she wrapped around her shoulders and her head. There, in almost a second, he saw a society woman, who, he had believed he loved, transformed into as savage an Indian as ever massacred the innocent.

Before the blazing eyes of the outstretched hand, Vance Wizzard backed out of the room, and until he had reached the street did he regain his self-possession, then he whispered:

"Good God! But Mrs. Clayton, I must warn her, or rather Stephen," then he hurried to the nearest club, where he made his way to give the warning without betraying the woman he loved, and to a great degree in better moods he still entertained a great tenderness.

CHAPTER X.

THE VOICE OF DECISION.

Love had felt a mighty fear, then dropped away into a merciful swoon, as Varion threw her out of the way of death. When she awakened, she was a girl once more, down in the old dear garden, and Kerle was leaping the box-hedge, and now he was with her, nervously he been talking about something, she did not know what, but she certainly heard his voice, soft and well-modulated, so different from the voices she had been hearing. When? Where? Why in some dreadful, cold place was there something went wrong.

How light-headed she was! It was strange that she could feel so in the old garden. She must be dead. Where else could she be? Then she suddenly opened her eyes, and gave a little shudder. She knew only too well where she was, in her own room, in her husband's magnificent Fifth avenue house.

It was all a dream, and Kerle, her dear playmate Kerle was part of it.

She was veiled up from under the lids she closed upon her violet eyes, when a cool, firm hand was laid upon her brow, and Kerle's voice said gently:

"Control yourself."

His firm touch, his quiet manner acted like magic, and she again opened her eyes with her strength in the middle ones.

"Kerle!" she whispered, betraying more to his anxious heart than she would have imagined.

"Yes, Love." He made no pretense of calling her Mrs. Clayton.

"What happened?"

"You were at the Gardens."

Love sat up, saying excitedly:

"I remember! A young man caught me! He escaped, did he not?" and she clutched Kerle's arm.

"See here, Love," came from the doorway, "if you let yourself work up like that, I'll send in one of my old-fashioned physicians who will give you an opiate. Dr. Davenport said he would prefer to use moral suasion. I had not known that he was your physician," and Stephen Clayton so forgot his good manners, his duties as host and his gratitude toward the man there, who had taken Love under his medical care, as to sneer.

"I never have been before, because Love was never sick," was the quiet reply. "Come to her Kerle said quietly."

"No, Love, I am quiet and go right to sleep you will wake up in good condition and be able to go on all the calls."

Love smiled, plaintively, as she asked:

"But first, how were you there?"

"I was going to explain later to be explained, but could not reach you in time to save you. You were so sleepy, and one more the firm, cool slim fingers rested on the throbbing brow, and like a little child, she young wife sank into a placid slumber.

"It looks like hypnotism," Stephen said uneasily, as the two men went from the room, into the library.

"Nothing of the kind, simply firmness," the young physician replied. "In our Southland, my dear sir, we have some strange ways of doing things, but they work. I have been very successful in some of my work, and I would be very glad to proffer my services with regard to that young man who saved Love."

Stephen felt like frowning, but scarcely dared, at Kerle's quiet use of his wife's first name.

"You mean Weymouth? Oh, his father is rich enough to hire the best of doctors, he's in no need of charity," he replied indignantly.

Kerle felt his face flush, but he controlled his anger, and returned quietly:

"I know that. The impression I spoke is that I fear a very serious spinal complication. Physicians differ regarding it, the majority regarding it as incurable. I am one of the minority."

"Indeed!" Stephen asked, stifling a yawn.

Kerle nodded, he dared not trust himself to speak.

"I did not know you were in town," Stephen continued.

"Just arrived today, and after registering at the Old Astor, called here. I was told that you were downtown, and Love with a party at Madison Square Gardens, I followed her there."

Stephen could take no exception to the courteous, pleasant manner of the physician, and so he adopted a new line. Offering a cigar, which was refused on the grounds that a physician ought not to smoke for the sake of his patients, Stephen said carelessly:

"Better change your hotel. Don't like your choice."

"Thanks, but I have always gone there, and so did my family before me, Clayton. We Southerners are very much inclined to run in ruts in some things."

Falling on this line, Stephen asked:

"Will my wife be all right when she recovers?"

"That is a difficult question to answer," Kerle said slowly. "I do not think she will be ill, but her nerves received not a terrible shock, and she will need very gentle handling."

"You speak as though she were a piece of thin china," laughed Stephen.

"And so my women are much more delicate, and she especially so, because of peculiar nerve rearing."

Stephen knew that Kerle was not satisfied with the explanation, but he was a man to take the bull by the horns, so he asked with his hearty manner:

"Kerle, I want to you like the society veneer I have been trying to put on the little girl?" and the physician flushed, as he replied:

"Not at all. When you have a perfect article of the real wood, why put on veneer? And now that you have broached the subject, Mr. Clayton, let me say something that I am shocked at the change these months have made in your wife."

"Mr. Clayton, both as a man and a physician I tell you this, and I am glad that I have had the chance to tell you first."

"Then you see her after a racking accident."

He mused at her face for nearly two hours, through powerful glasses prior to it, and to my intense sorrow discovered that it was the fact of the case. Love—"

"I would like to break your neck, your damned neck," Stephen cried, starting from his seat.

"Perhaps you had better not try, Stephen Clayton."

The two men stood confronting each other as they had once before, but they were cold coldly:

"You will forget that when you knew Mrs. Clayton she was but a girl, and that now she is a married woman," but Kerle replied:

"I remember, Stephen Clayton, that she left her intimate friends, and married instead, with you, her husband, and that in a little more than half a year, I find her looking almost broken-hearted. What have you done with her? How have you treated her? What is the secret which is driving into the child's soul? You must feel some love for her, or he is no friend of mine! I will inspire love, or has yours all vanished with marriage, with possession?"

"By God, man, you can stand here in my own house and talk to me like that," Stephen roared. "I married a girl, nothing but a girl, I know that, but I thought your Southern girls were more placid and less unstable as old as our girls here of twenty. She seems utterly ignorant of the common rules of society, and has given me nothing but trouble upon me, and commences her social career, of course, by being married. If my wife has made no success, either as a society woman or a housekeeper, I do not care, I am living up to my part of the bargain. If she is disappointed, so am I. I feel a dozen times a day that I took the responsibility of her off her father's shoulders, do you see?" the wife of my friend—"

Kerle understood him, and replied almost under his breath:

"Your friend, indeed. You know well enough that I wanted to marry her. You know that I proposed to her before she left, and she was old enough to listen to it. You know that I refrained from showing her any love, because I wished to keep her from forcing the rose into its bloom, and you break in, and gather what I had cultivated."

"It was not difficult."

"It was not, because she did not know her own mind," was the quick retort.

"Then you dare to tell me that my wife loves you?" Stephen cried.

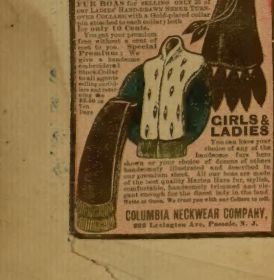
"Not in the least. She never did love me, or she would not have left me, but I do declare that if you do not show her the greatest tenderness, she will go into what was known some years ago as a decline, and die."

Stephen arose, smiling, and holding out his hand said with a slight return to his usual hearty manner:

"See here, Doctor, we ought to be ashamed of ourselves. I confess I have neglected too much of Mrs. Clayton, but this summer I am going to take her to Europe and we may stay a year or so, and when she returns she will then have acquired the polish she needs to queen over my house. Shake hands as a guarantee that we both will do all we can to make her happy," and being thus adjured, Kerle could not refuse, although he added very seriously:

"Please to not forget my decision with regard to her health. I think her nerves are in a very serious condition," and Stephen replied, almost gaily:

"We'll have them all mended. Come in whenever you can, and as soon as Mrs Clayton is herself again, you must meet some of our friends at dinner," but when the door had closed upon him, Stephen muttered several deep oaths, and then wrote a short note, addressing it to: "Miss Dahlia Hardborn."



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CHAPTER XI.

THE VOICE OF DESPAIR.

Racking pains had tortured his young body, but Varion had bravely borne it all, for he thought of the girl he loved.

Frightfully painful experiments were made upon him to see if there was any chance for his recovery, but he had the memory of her dear face, and the thought that he had used her life to comfort him.

Then came the fatal day, when the best physicians in the city declared that there was no hope, and that Varion, in the strength of his wonderful physical development, must continue through life a cripple, and never be outside the pale of pain.

"He was broken to the son first, for he appeared stronger than the father, and he, remembering from what he had saved the lovely young creature, only smiled and said gently:

"Well, if I have to stand it, I suppose I'll get used to it after awhile. Much obliged for the trouble you've taken," and they called him a hero, greater than battle produces.

The three friends, Stephen, Vance and Phayeton Gerrymander, took Weymouth, the father, and tried to make him understand, but it was impossible.

"But the boy's strong as hell," Weymouth cried angrily.

"I know, but there are hurts that no strength can withstand," Vance tried to explain.

Weymouth listened, thought of his handsome, strong son, and then suddenly remembered that he had a daughter, and cried with a great oath:

"Curse your wife, Stephen! If it had not been for her fool action, I'd have my boy with me now."

Stephen flushed angrily, when a quiet, calm voice asked:

"Will you not allow me to explain a little more clearly than you can, being laymen," and they turned to see Kerle Payenport.

The three men who all had tried to help their friend but were glad to be relieved, thanked him, and Payenport, the expert, left the anguished father in his capable hands.

In a few words, avoiding technical terms, Kerle explained just the injury done the spine, and how an injury affected the nervous system.

"Then I intruded," he continued, "because I want to ask you something."

"What have I to give?" cried Quenton Weymouth, who had so short a time before been one of the most light-hearted of society men.

"I want to borrow your son for at least a year," Kerle said gently.

"Borrow my son?" For God sake, man, don't play with my feelings!"

"I play with them? No, indeed, my friend, I just want your permission, and then all I have to experiment upon him with the hope that I can if not cure him, help him very considerably."

Quenton Weymouth stood gazing at the young physician with wide-open mouth, then he asked huskily:

"Then you put your opinion against that of three eminent physicians?"

"I do."

"Upon what do you base the courage you possess?"

"My previous experiments. I absolutely cured a deformed man, himself just as your son. He was a faithful fellow, and allowed me to do exactly as I would."

"Then the way is a hard and painful one."

"Frightfully so, but there is the hope held out."

"What would you do with him?"

"Take him to my home, keep him with me for a year, at that time I would know either of you, and perhaps I may be able to interest him a little. Our minds run in the same direction, to a certain extent."

"But your wife, or folks?"

"I am alone, and am likely to be," was the quiet reply, and with the keenness given him by his own sorrow, Quenton Weymouth learned Dr. Payenport's secret, and knew that his son would be tenderly treated.

"You are a noble man, Doctor," he said simply, holding out his hand, and then the two made their way to the hospital, where Varion Weymouth had lain for a month.

During all this time, Love had sent flowers and wanted to call upon her rescuer, but Stephen had forbidden it until the physicians had rendered their decision, but when he left Weymouth, he called her up by telephone, and ordered her to call for him at his office, with the automobile, prepared to go to the hospital.

She was not quite in the mood to make such a visit. It had been very hard for her to meet Kerle, as she did from day to day, for she did not want him to learn her secret, that she was so unhappy that she scarcely knew where to turn, and that as she had warned her husband, her soul was slipping away from him.

Still, obedient, as she always was, she called for him, and they were soon waiting in the hospital while their cards were sent up to Varion's private room.

"It might cheer him up, poor boy," his nurse decided, and Mr. and Mrs. Clayton were announced.

Varion, a shadow of his former self, in plaster casts, and forced to lie in a most uncomfortable position, was so touching a sight, that Love let the great bunch of violets she was carrying, drop from her hands, and gliding forward cried softly:

"I shall never forgive myself."

The boy looked at her. His sweetest dreams had come true, his darling was there by his side.

"It has been my greatest happiness," he said distinctly, "to know that you escaped unhurt."

"How could you be so brave?" Love cried.

"May one from out of the grave tell you?" Varion asked wistfully.

"You may say anything, you poor, dear boy," was her impetuous answer, and in purest pity, she touched his cheek with her tender lips.

"You almost unman me with your kindness," he whispered, closing his eyes for an instant, then opening them, he said so low that she had to bend to catch his words:

"I did it because from the instant I saw you I loved you, my own love," his voice rising slightly on the last word, which he applied as a term of affection, not knowing it was her name.

"You must not," Love cried shrinking back.

"Why not? My love can not hurt you, and it is so precious to me."

"But I am a married woman," Love retorted, every bit of color leaving her lovely face.

"Who are you?" he grasped.

"Love Clayton, Stephen Clayton's wife," she whispered, then said quickly:

"Come, be hat friends," while at the same moment the gleaming eyes of Dahlia Rathborn were urging Stephen on, and her rich voice whispered:

"Your wife had many lovers, my very dear friend. Here is one boy who risks his life for her, and uses her first name as you heard. How pure and fair she is!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE VOICE OF CALCULATION.

Hitherto but little has been said of Phayeton Gerrymander, and yet he plays an important part in this relation of the accidents surrounding the peculiar situation and events surrounding the married life of Stephen and Love Clayton.

The man was something of a mystery to his friends even, but he himself could safely have solved it all by a few words. He was a man very ambitious, and without means, but he managed to live well, and to gain for himself the reputation of being something of a wit and certainly a man of brains. Saying very little, he listened, gained the opinions of others, and when he did speak, his words were listened to. Whenever he heard a story, he stored it away, and after others had forgotten it, he brought it forth, changed, as his own.

One purpose he cherished, and that was to marry a rich woman, and he early selected the one he intended to make his wife. Love had no desire for her, but he admired her and he knew that he could master her, strong-willed as she was, for he was a man of a certain dogged character, which if directed in the line of real work, might have made him famous. As it was, he preferred to gain possession of great wealth more easily.

For several years, he had quietly and doggedly pursued Dahlia Rathborn, never showing his hand, but making himself useful to her in many ways. He had watched Stephen and Vance dangle about her, and the one marry, and the other transfer his attentions to another, and then he decided to step in.

It was soon after Dahlia's return from the hospital where she had witnessed the pitiful interview between Love and her brave young rescuer, that Gerrymander sent up his card, and after a moment's hesitation, Dahlia had him brought to her, in her own private room.

She was lounging in a low chair, by a bright wood fire, when he came in, and did not rise, but extended a hand, entirely guiltless of rings.

The man noticed this, and also that she wore none of her beautiful ornaments, and understood.

"Welcome, I am feeling a little lonely," she said pleasantly, and without waiting for permission, Gerrymander drew up a chair, and sat down so near that he could almost feel her breath upon his cheek.

Dahlia noticed, and raised her eyebrows.

"I want to sit right here, and I am going to," he replied, and she was astonished to notice the masterful tone in his voice.

"Really?" she asked.

"Really," he replied, and then there was silence for a few seconds, until she asked:

"Well?"

"I've come here to tell you that we are going to be married," he returned quietly.

The bright red leaped to the dark cheeks, and the proud lip curled.

"Indeed?" she asked.

"Yes," and he laid his strong hands on hers and looked her straight in the eyes.

"Why?" was her calm question. To her wonderment she was not even annoyed.

"Because I will it. I know you do not love me, I do not pretend to love you, but I think I know what purpose animates your life, and I believe my friend's interests and animosity towards the same persons, and that as your husband I can help you."

"Proceed."

"Exactly. Some women are so young and innocent that they are bores," he returned, his pale face flushing, for he entertained a resentment so deep as to overreach even anger against poor Love, who had been obliged to sharply reprove him for a certain familiarity, and familiarity he had adopted toward her whenever he managed to speak with her alone. He astonished her preceptor by her energy and apt rebuke, but while he never again offended, he had resolved to make her pay dearly for her temerity.

Dahlia was a very brilliant and experienced woman of the world, and she instantly understood, and her heart leaped with joy to think that some one else hated the girl bride.

"Now," Gerrymander continued, his face still red, "I know that you are planning the destruction of their married happiness, but are you not making a boomerang which will recoil upon yourself?"

"I do not care," she said moodily, staring into the fire.

"Oh, yes you do. Life is awfully long. You are not the kind of a woman to live away from your kind. While there is some Indian blood—no, don't flush that way, I like it—there is more white, which longs for the company of men and the best. You could not endure life spent sneaking from one foreign place to another, the partner of a gloomy, remorse-stricken man, who in the end would leave you. Oh, yes, he would, because he does not, nor will he ever, love you."

Dahlia sprung to her feet:

"I tell you he will."

Gerrymander shook his head.

"No, not after he has loved such a woman as his wife. It is a strange thing, dear, a thing we do not comprehend, what a bold woman of that kind take upon men. She is not suited to him in any way, but he loves her even while he hates her name, and will always."

"What do you propose, then?" Dahlia asked angrily, her magnificent figure drawn to its full height, her eyes flashing.

"Come here, and sit down. My man said softly, "and I will tell you."

For more than three hours, then, the two talked, then he asked:

"Does my plan suit?"

"Perfectly."

"And you'll then give me possession of that proud head of yours?" he exulted, grasping her hands and looking deep into her eyes.

"Do you care for the heart of a half-breed?" she asked bitterly.

"Do I? I love the spirit of the chase glowing in his veins, and bending forward he kissed her passionately upon the mutinous, red mouth.

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His Limit.

"Have you ever been made a fool of by a woman?"

"Yes, I'm afraid I'm guilty."

"Have you ever lost money on a horse race?"

"Yes, I'm ashamed to say that I have."

"Have you ever rocked a boat?"

"If I must tell the whole truth, I cannot deny that once I did rock a boat, and while I am at it let me confess all my shame. I once had a fight over a professional baseball game; this scar over my left eye shows where I was kicked by a mule whose heels I attempted to tickle; here is a certain hillside a gravestone where lies a boy at whom I aimed a gun which I didn't know was loaded, and I have written letters with the request that they should be burned after their recipients had read them, but I positively decline to admit that I ever played a poker with a stranger on an ocean liner."

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It is always safe to accuse a homely girl of being pretty.

Peary did nobly, but the pole is still 200 miles away from discovery.

Count Boni is a conspicuous example of a man who overworked a good thing.

In the course of time the bottom dollar of a spendthrift is sure to come out on top.

A hero is a man who happened to be on hand at the right time and made good.

By the time the average man achieves success he is too old to appreciate it.

France has more money in circulation in proportion to its population than any other country.

But is not this almost the first time a Gould ever made an unlucky financial investment?

The yearly importation of pearls to London reaches $5,000,000. Most of them come from Bombay.

King Alfonso is weakening under the strain of trying to live up to the requirements of a perpetual crisis.

At the Government pawnshops in Paris about 250,000 watches and 50,000 wedding rings are deposited every year.

One of the things a conceited youth can't understand is how any girl can be so foolish as to turn him down for some other chap.

We take little stock in the assertion that Reni Castellane will be compelled to go to work. Rather than face that alternative he'll marry again.

Kansas farmers are complaining that their ears of corn this year are too long for the sheller. There is always something the matter with Kansas.

There are not railways enough in the country to carry away the water indigestion that has been aroused by the looters of the San Francisco relief fund.

Fines aggregating $180,000,000 may be assessed against the Standard Oil Company. However, the actual penalties that are to receive portions of this sum should not begin spending the money until they get it.

Thousands of the poorer classes in Russia have been distranchised by a new ukase. If the Czar finally gets it down so that he is only himself and the Grand Dukes vote he will have the kind of Douma that will look pretty good to him.

Jacob H. Schiff wants the national banks to hold a reserve of 25 per cent of their deposits with permission to issue 5 per cent of that in emergencies. That might be a good scheme if some banker didn't think an emergency had arrived when some sly friend handed him a particularly good tip on the races.

THE STOLEN MILLIONS;

THE BANK PRESIDENT'S CRIME.

By MAJOR ALBION F. GRANT, author of "The Deuce of Diamonds," etc.

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CHAPTER XVII.
WHEN THIEVES FALL OUT.

There comes once at least in the career of every criminal a moment of remorse and despair. No matter how deeply he has plunged into the vortex of sin, he feels that he would like to get back and once more be an honest man.

Such was the case with Saul Pentland when he opened the little dresser in the hotel at Naples and found the valise and the stolen millions gone.

The adventurer had deserted him, she had cast at his feet the jewels bought with stolen money and he was alone in a strange land with the hounds of justice at his heels. He thought, indeed, he could hear them baying in his path and already, as it were, he felt the grip of the law on his shoulder.

For a moment he remained in a sort of stupor, his senses almost deserting him. The nerve that had kept him up till then was fast waning.

Gone!

Somehow or other the lock of the dresser had been deftly picked.

He did not, he cried Lorraine. There were sleek thieves in Italy as well as in the United States and he doubted not seeing he had not exceed the room during his absence and robbed him.

Then he thought of the thief robbing another, but Pentland did not view the matter in this light.

He had a few dollars on his person; he had the jewels Sylvia Sharp had accepted, but the valise contained a fortune beautiful. It was as nothing if he expected to continue his flight from Italy.

For a moment he thought of giving himself up and taking the consequences, but the thought of prison walls made him shudder. He would be taken back to the scene of his crime and made to face the hundreds he had robbed. Then he thought of Clyde. What had become of her? He remembered Sylvia's words that the girl was no longer dangerous. Where was she? Had the scoundrel gone down with her?

A more wretched man than Saul Pentland never lived. He heard the laughter of merry crowds beneath his window, a delightful breeze was stirring the waters of the bay, and Sylvia—what had become of this American Delilah?

All at once his thoughts of her turned to thoughts of vengeance.

He blamed his downfall on her, he cursed her from the bottom of his heart when she was but one of the many causes of his misfortune.

It was his own evil heart that had got him into all this trouble. The woman was but a part of it. She had watched her opportunity and pounced on it like a bird of prey.

Pentland dared not tell his loss. He dared not tell of the stolen millions. That would only bring him into prominence and he trembled at the thought of it.

At last he relocked the dresser and left the room.

Down on the street in the throng he was barely noticed.

Suddenly some one brushed his sleeve and he looked around.

A man, an American, as he well knew, was standing before him.

"Is this not Mr. Saul Pentland?" queried the man, looking out his hand.

The fugitive banker started.

"You are mistaken," he said, assuming some dignity. "I do not know the gentleman whose name you have mentioned."

The man scanned him closely.

"I beg your pardon, I thought you were Mr. Pentland of the United States."

"I am from the United States, but I am not Saul Pentland."

The man walked away, but the banker dared not looked after him.

At last, however, he picked up a little courage to turn his head and a few feet away stood the man who had spoke him like a hawk.

He knew the man did not believe him.

Pentland went back into the hotel and straight to his room.

He took a revolver from the table drawer a revolver and a little tin box.

With these in his possession he went back to the street and sought a secluded park where he could exhibit the contents of the box.

All at once he heard behind him a voice that sent a thrill of rejoicing to his heart. It was a woman's voice.

Without waiting a moment Pentland sprang up and darted away.

"Good! thank heaven!" he exclaimed, coming suddenly upon the cashier at a table with another man and a stranger.

"You?" cried the cashier. "I have just received a letter from you and thought you would have been looking for you."

The stranger at the table bowed and walked away.

"How goes it?" asked Lorraine.

"Bad enough. I have been robbed and deserted."

A sinister smile came to the cashier's lips.

"Two misfortunes at the same time, eh? Perhaps one at least is for your good."

"I think so, but the other? The valise with the securities has been stolen."

Lorraine affected great surprise.

"I thought you guarded it," said he.

"I did, but not well enough, it seems. I am left with a little money and some jewels I dare not sell."

"What has become of her?"

"She got the tiffs and is gone."

"Good riddance," laughed the cashier. "I could have strangled her the other night in the car."

For a moment Pentland was silent.

"You have seen the papers?" he asked suddenly.

"Yes. They're moving."

"And we've got to make tracks."

"I guess I shall remain in Naples."

"But what would you do?"

"Oh, they'll be satisfied with you," grinned the cashier. "They want the big fish, you know."

A pallor he could not keep off came to the fugitive's face.

"Look here," said he and stopped suddenly.

"Well, what is it?"

"Do you think to escape if they find me?"

"I might. I didn't do much. I only did your bidding which you know."

The banker leaned across the table, his face now flushed to the temples and his eyes nearly starting from their sockets.

"You mean, miserable hound and traitor!" he cried, glaring at Lorraine. "You're as deep in the mud as I am in the mire, and if the law deals with me it deals with you as well!"

"Ha! think you so?" cried Lorraine. "I didn't carry off the securities from the valise."

"You helped. You suggested. You were an expert in the business of concealment and forgery. Do you think now that I will keep my bargain with you?"

"About your daughter?"

"Yes, about Clyde. She is somewhere in Naples. I half believe you know who robbed me awhile ago."

"That's good!" laughed Lorraine, but the next moment he fell back from the wicked eyes of the banker.

"Do fiend. That was your pal who just left us. Where are my papers?"

Pentland came around the table with the look of an enraged lion.

His hand found Lorraine's throat and the two went to the ground together.

"Die, villain!" cried the banker.

Something from the cashier's pocket, a flat package which Pentland picked up, caught his eye, released the cashier and darted off on a run.

The stolen securities were in his possession once more!

CHAPTER XVIII.
THE END OF A WICKED LIFE.

The hours were dreary ones to Clyde Pentland in the House of the Terror.

That she had been deceived to the spot through the designs of Sylvia Sharp she did not doubt.

The long night passed and day came.

Not for a moment had she slept through the long hours. She wondered what had become of her girl friends, Margery and Lily, who, no doubt, were almost distracted over their loss. And her father? What had become of him?

As the sun crept over the great bay, turning its waves to glossy silver, Clyde took hope. Surely she would be found.

Suddenly footsteps came toward the locked door. A key sounded in the lock and the portal swung open.

"Will the signorina step this way?" said the little Italian-eyed woman who appeared.

In another moment Clyde was in the corridor.

"You are free."

"Free! She could not understand. Free after that night of fear and ghosts! Free! free to go out into the street and continue her chase.

"You will ask no questions," continued the little woman. "You are free and that is enough."

A question came to Clyde's lips, but she beat it back. She would ask none.

As soon as possible she was driven to her hotel. Margery was there almost crazed with grief. The girl had waited all night for her return. In a short time she would have informed the police and had them look for Clyde.

"You were not ill nor had an accident?" asked Clyde.

"No! We went to the opera and came back to find you gone" was the reply. "Tell me all!"

Clyde did so without embellishment and Margery listened with ears to the narrative.

"It is Sylvia Sharp's work!" she cried. "That adventuress does not want you on the trail. Come, let us turn the tables on her. She is at the head with your father."

Clyde shook her head. She was at first, but at last resolved to go with Margery.

"We carries the securities in a valise," continued Margery. "We can face him, and in your presence and after hearing your appeal, he will make restitution."

"He shall!"

They went down.

On the street they found themselves in a throng of people.

"We will walk," said Margery. "It is not far."

In a few moments they were in the vicinity of the hotel when Margery drew back and clutched Clyde's arm.

"Look! look! look past the lamp-post!" cried she in a whisper.

Clyde looked and started.

"It is Mr. Lorraine."

Lorraine, indeed, had come across the cashier of the looted bank taking his ease in the bright sunshine and enjoying the morning breeze.

"Do not let him see us," admonished Clyde. "He will seek him by and by."

As they turned a corner they were pushed back toward the buildings by a throng of excited people.

A policeman was shouting to all to stand back. And the people, with curses, were crowding to the wall with cries of terror from the women.

"It is a runaway," cried Margery. "It is a cabriolet and contains a woman."

Clyde saw all this dimly as if not in the breathless crowd.

One woman the horse at breakneck speed, the vehicle toppling half the time and the woman occupant shrieking at the top of her voice.

Some of the male spectators laughed at her fright, while the women said nothing but looked at the policeman, wondering if he would attempt to stop the frantic beast.

Suddenly the horse veered toward the crowd in which the two women were standing.

Margery seized Clyde and tried to pull her aside, but the scene strangely fascinated her.

In another moment at the very feet of the crowd the cabriolet struck the curb stones and the woman was thrown out on her head. She fell almost at Clyde's feet.

The banker's daughter gave vent to a startling cry and almost fainted.

She knelt by the woman and held upon her arm and the frantic people were turning from the shell of the woman lying on the pavement with blood staining her handsome clothing and her face white and ghastly.

"Mother!" said Clyde. "Let us get beyond this tragedy. It is too terrible to think of.

But something held Margery to the spot. She leaned forward, and took a step forward and with distended eyes was gazing at the poor woman whose life was not gone the policeman, had dared as yet to touch.

"What is it?" asked the frightened Clyde.

"Come and look," said Margery, pulling her friend forward.

"No! no! I would not."

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"Yes, come and see what retribution has done."

Breathless and white-faced the banker's child allowed herself to be conducted to where she could look down into the ghastly, upturned face at which half a hundred people were gazing awe-stricken and silent.

"Who is it?" asked Clyde.

"What, don't you know?"

Pentland's daughter shook her head and looked at Margery Dale without a word.

"Tis she, the enchantress," said the girl. "Tis the adventuress and justice has overtaken her."

"But I do not yet understand."

"It is Sylvia Sharp, you see."

Clyde broke Margery's sentence with an exclamation.

What! this woman her father's companion? This creature lying dead on the sidewalk? Was the American adventuress, Sylvia Sharp? She could not think of it.

"There is no mistake," continued Margery. "I have seen her often. This woman is the enchantress of our own land. She! She does not stir. She is dead."

While the two girls looked the officers picked up the body and carried it away.

The startled crowd drew back and a few gathered over the accident.

As they lifted Sylvia from the pavement something that glittered fell from her bosom and rolled sparkling to the feet of the American girls.

Margery sprang forward with a little cry, but Clyde pulled her back.

"No! no! one of the accursed gems," said the banker's daughter. "It was bought with stolen money. God pity the wretched woman! Those gems of sin is death!"

"Yes," said Margery, looking into the beautiful and transformed face of Clyde Pentland. "The wages of sin is death."

Pentland from the trade spot and when they ventured to look back a woman was on her knees washing up the blood of Sylvia Sharp, the enchantress.

And over the bay on the mist that stirred the sails of the Neapolitan craft there seemed to come an echo of Clyde's words: "The wages of sin is death!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE END OF THE TETHER.

Saul Pentland stood in the Holy City within the shadow of St. Peter's and found himself alone.

He had fled from Naples with the stolen securities which he had snatched from Lorraine and felt, for the moment at least, that he was beyond the trail of his hunters.

The guilty banker had gone to the full length of his bank.

He did not know that Sylvia Sharp had met with the terrible death described in the last chapter. He wanted to get beyond the reach of the American siren, the woman who had plunged him into the vortex of crime and, if some good fortune had whispered in his ear that she was no more, he would have celebrated the event in a debauch.

At the end of Saul Pentland's career.

There was more in the thought than pen can describe.

Pentland thought of his child, wondering what had become of her.

He had never met again? He knew that Clyde had tracked him to Naples, but Sylvia had made the two daughters of Italy were sharp and he did not know but one had found her heart.

If he had pierced the shadows that stole round him that night in Rome he might have seen a figure closely watching him.

There was no movement on the part of the spy, but Pentland did not see.

Presently he moved away to have the dark-robed one at his heels and when he turned back into his hotel the lights fell upon the spy's face.

It was Clyde—Clyde, his own child!

They had found but fruitless father. Space had failed to separate them and Clyde Pentland had followed him to Rome and was still with the murderer of Sylvia Sharp's death still on her mind.

Pentland went direct to his room.

Locking the door behind him he threw himself into a chair and for some time sat there in semi-darkness, the only ray of light that entered the chamber being from the one that twinkled the sky like a diamond field and shot a faint radiance through the window.

Suddenly he laughed to himself, rose and turned on the full light.

Then he set forth the little valise. This time it was not empty.

He shook its contents on the table and ran his hand through the papers which were worth a king's ransom.

How lucky he was to have recovered the stolen papers from Lorraine.

Again the thought that in other lands he could purchase immunity and become again a man where the hands of justice could not reach.

All this was honey to Saul Pentland.

Suddenly fortune approached the door, the papers were tumbled back into the grip and Pentland threw himself behind the couch.

The sounds ceased at the door.

"Who's there?" asked the American banker as he put his hand upon the weapon he carried.

"A friend."

He started. Who could be his friend now and in a strange land? It was false. He had no friends in that part of the world.

"You must be a little more explicit," said he, as he crossed the room.

"A friend who can do you a great favor," came through the door.

Pentland laid his hand on the knob, but hesitated.

"Just as you please," said the unseen one. "If you do no care to see me, well and good. I can go."

The footsteps appeared to go away.

"Why not?" said Pentland to himself. "I am armed."

He unlocked the door and looked into the hall. The corridor was not very light, but he could make out the figure of some one who stood at the door of his visitor.

"O, you will see me, then?" said this individual as he came forward.

Pentland held the door open with one hand while with the other he felt the revolver.

The man who entered was young and darkly handsome. He had the keen black eye of a Spaniard, but there was something of a tigerish nature in his looks and movements.

"What is it?" asked Pentland as he shut the door and turned upon his visitor.

The stranger smiled and walked over to the table where he stopped, leaning slightly upon it.

"What is it worth, signor?" he suddenly asked, but with a manner that startled Pentland.

"What is it worth?" he echoed. "What do you mean? I have me in the dark."

At this the stranger smiled again and shrugged his well-proportioned shoulders.

"You ought to know, signor," he went on. "I merely asked what is it worth. I am Andrea Ponta."

"I do not know you."

"No, you haven't been in the Holy City long. I am Andrea Ponta, a man spy."

At this Saul Pentland fell back, but he could not escape the glowing eyes of the Italian.

"They want you, signor."

"Want me?"

"The police of two continents want you."

The fugitive banker did not ask for what.

It was enough that Andrea Ponta had said that the police waited just beyond the door he would not have been surprised.

"You have come to arrest me in after a short pause. "I know all the ropes and the intricacies of the secret service of the police. I can save you, signor."

Pentland almost went forward for very joy.

"Are you sure of that?" he cried.

"I have secured agents who are not the first American I have succored in time of need."

"Then do it and win my everlasting favor."

"But I must have more than that. Favors buy no bread for the little ones."

"What do you want?"

Ponta glanced around the room.

"You have no money," he said he.

"I have but little cash with me just now," he the spoke, "but I have almost stripped me. I have a few jewels though."

"Which can be converted into money," grinned the Italian as he saw them."

The banker drew from an inner pocket of the coat that he wore a package of Sylvia Sharp's honors and let them sparkle in his hand.

The dark eyes of the Italian seemed to get a newer sparkle.

"I'll take the lot," he asked, glancing up at Pentland.

"All if you save me."

"It shall be done! But are they genuine?"

"Think you I would have such things about me if they were not?" cried Pentland. "I am no rogue to carry false gems on my person."

Andrea Ponta took the gems and weighed them in his hand.

"I'll do it for these," he said, scarcely above a whisper. "I can thwart the police of both worlds. All will look on her neck. Ha! ha! I will come again, signor."

Still clutching the jewels the Italian walked deliberately toward the door while Pentland looked on as if in a dream.

"I shall clear the way first, signor, he said, pausing at the door. "I shall come again. Keep up a good heart. I will come."

With this he opened the door and with the same movement smoothed the black mustache he vanished.

Pentland sat down like a man in a dream.

"Had he been robbed again? Would the Italian keep his word and get him out of the toils or—

He ceased to think. It was no time for thinking for the clouds were hovering about him and the end of the long trail was at hand.

He locked the door and covered his face with his hands. The Roman night seemed to become as brilliant. The dome of St. Peter's lifted itself toward Heaven as if it had just received the Angelus from the bells.

And at the end of his tether in the little chamber of the hotel sat the most miserable man in the world.

CHAPTER XX.

RETRIBUTION.

Not far away and in the same city stood two young women.

They were alone in a small room of an unpretentious hotel and one had just come in from the street.

"I saw him, Margery," said Clyde Pentland. "I saw my father, but he seemed so utterly miserable that I had not the heart to make myself known to him."

"He was on the street, then?"

"Yes, in the shadow of St. Peter's."

"Quite alone, you say?"

"Yes, I followed him to his hotel and saw him vanish."

"He may take another flight."

"No, I do not think he suspects our presence in Rome. He will rest here for a time at least."

"If the authorities do not disturb him."

"I think they will not find him for a little while. Let him have his rest. He needs it."

The two girls, Margery and Clyde, had followed the banker across the sea and were now at the end of the trail.

Clyde, while she yearned to throw herself upon her father's bosom and breathe into his ears the love that had not all been destroyed by his crime, hesitated to do so.

Presently the door of the adjoining room opened and closed.

Voices reached the girls' ears.

"We can make the arrest at any time," said some one. "We have him dead to rights. He is at the Hotel Italia under the name of Andrea Pentland. I have sent Andrea to play his part and the boy knows how to do it. He will bring me information within a short time. The Americans will pay well for him if we can hide the banker and pretend that we have not found him. When they increase the reward we can come forward with his body and get it all."

"It is a capital plan! I never saw any one just like you, Ponta. You know all the tricks of the trade. I think this one worth a bottle of the best."

Thereupon the two girls heard the man ring and then order a bottle of Chartreuse.

"You hear all, Margery?" whispered Clyde at her friend's ear.

"Every word, Clyde."

"The villains are going to arrest father, hide him till the reward is increased and—"

"Get it all!" cried Margery.

"More than that. They will get hold of the securities which are worth a million at least and keep the poor depositors out of their own."

"That is the very plan."

Margery Clyde clutching Margery's hand. "We will get ahead of the rascals in Rome. We are making merry over the wine and we will find him first."

"Your father?"

"Yes, yes. I can face him now!"

Margery unlocked the door softly and the two girls, Rome by the corridor was poorly lighted and they were compelled to almost grope their way down the stair whence they found the street.

"Quick! to the Hotel Italia!" cried Clyde. "Something may be happening there. You remember what one of the men said about Andrea Ponta?"

On, on they went. The night closed about them and the lights of the city faded into starring faces, but they did not mind and kept resolutely on.

"There we are at last," said the banker's daughter as the Hotel Italia rose before them. "But I am afraid we have come after what has happened. We will at least outwit these conspirators behind them."

They plunged at once into the hotel and caught a boy who fell back at sight of them.

"Where is my father?" cried Clyde Pentland. "Show us his room?"

The boy shook his head.

"Come, don't pretend that you don't know," chimed in Margery, clutching the lad's shoulder. "This is a matter of life and death. Which is the American's room?"

The boy, seeing that the American girl, the boy pulled away and promised to show them the way.

In a few moments they stood on another floor and the lad pointed toward a certain door.

"That's the signor's room," said he, and scampered on down.

"Come!" cried Clyde. "We will both face him at the same time. God help us if we be too late."

Clyde, the banker's daughter, hurried forward and stopped on the designated door.

There was a slight noise on the inside.

Then a voice that was the banker's voice.

"Tis he! 'tis father!" said Clyde in a whisper to her companion.

A moment's silence followed.

"Who is there, I say?" demanded the one beyond the door.

"Father! father! do you not know my voice?"

"My God!" the girls heard in startled accents.

"Wait a few moments," pleaded Pentland. "Then it may be too late. We are here to save you. Do not be afraid, your Clyde—"

The strange, dead silence of a moment ago fell again. The girls were impatient.

"The rascals are on your track!" cried Clyde through the door. "You have already been betrayed."

There was no reply.

"If you do not open the door we must force it," said the girl outside.

The same dreadful silence was the only reply.

"It does not look like a strong door," said Margery. She threw the lock yielded and the portal flew open.

The next moment Margery and Clyde Pentland were on the threshold.

Saul Pentland sat at a table in the middle of the room with his head bowed and one hand resting near a little tin box open on the table.

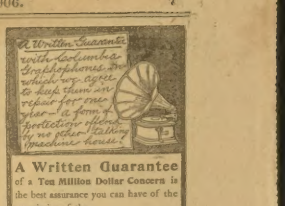
"Too late!" cried Clyde.

Yes, they were too late. The prisoner was at last ended for Saul Pentland. The secret poison, harbored for just such an outcome as this, had done its work and the trail of the bank president was ended.

"Look!" suddenly cried Margery, catching up a lot of papers from the table. "These are the missing securities and here is a line scribbled across one of them for you, Clyde."

The banker's daughter caught it up and read in her father's well-known writing:

(Continued on page eleven.)



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The best of all, send a 2-cent stamp, your name, address, date of birth and sex and we will tell you how to get it. Without cost, send no money. Send to-day. Don't delay. Write now. Free. KALVO, Dept. 7, Station A, Boston, Mass.

$1000 for 1c Send postal, your name and address. Receive the Marvels Remedy Co., Dept. E., Detroit, Mich., and receive a package of MARVEL CASCARA CHOCOLATE TABLETS, that will be gained higher than $1.00 by any druggist in your location. In metal boxes only. Twenty-five doses 25 cents.

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to us. If you will send us your name we will send you FREE by return mail a SOLID GOLD GUARANTEED 25 YEAR WATCH CHARM. Also will send at this advertisement and ring

Not Quite Explained.

Mrs. Blonde (wildly)—Where did this black hair come from?

Mr. Blonde—I was riding behind a black horse, and he switched his tail——

Mrs. Blonde—This is fine hair.

Mr. Blonde—Yes, it was a fine horse.

Qualified.

Lawyer—In regard to the merits of this case is your mind entirely free from prejudice or bias?

Talesman—Huh?

Lawyer—We'll accept this juror, your honor.

During the Spat.

Naggs—You are a burden to me.

Mrs. Naggs—You are a beast.

Naggs—Yes, that's it; I'm a beast of burden.

Doctor Pongo—Your appetite is poor?

Elephant—Very poor; I don't think I've eaten a ton in two days.

Choosing a Profession.

Pretty Girl—I have called, sir, to ask if I am beautiful enough for the stage?

Theatrical Manager (kindly)—No-o, my child, yours is not a good stage face; but don't despair. You would be a brilliant success as a typewriter.

Matter of Protection.

Traveler—The houses in some of the ancient cities I visited had walls nearly ten feet thick.

Mr. Flatdweller—They must have been built about the time pianos were invented.

True Bravery.

He—Miss DePlayne is certainly a brave and fearless girl.

She—That's right. Last Christmas I saw her stand under the mistletoe and defy half a dozen men.

AGENTS WANTED

Nearly all the readers of THE LEDGER will find them advertisements interest to them. There will be found among them some excellent chances of making money by selling goods to friends, neighbors and others. Those seeking such an opportunity will either as a regular or temporary occupation, should write the advertisers whose offers follow.

AGENTS WANTED — For Mend-a-Rip — Quickly improved. Better than ever. One or more of kinds of tape and tassel supplied without charge. Saves its cost many times a year. 1,200 feet Tassel Tape sold in one day. Every housekeeper buys. Every one you sell makes new customers. Write quick for terms. Sample 25 cents. Agents make $3 to $15 a day. One agent made $50 first week. Outfit free. Address, Mend-a-Rip Co., Box 1, Fredericktown, O.

JAPANESE POLISHING CLOTH POLISHES LIKE MAGIC in every home. Sample 10 cents. Agents wanted. Pioneer Supply Co., Box 36, Station W, Brooklyn, N.Y.

WANTED Good Man in each county to represent and advertise Hardware Department, put up samples, etc. Salary $21 weekly. Expense money advanced. Dept. W8, The Columbia House, Chicago.

SELL TOBACCO and cigars, locally or traveling. Salary or commission. Full time or side line. Goods well known. Experience unnecessary. Tobacco Worker, Box J 16, Danville, Va.

$25 PER WEEK and traveling expenses paid men to place Proprietaress (for stock and poultry) with dealers. Experience unnecessary. DEFIANCE A. CO., Parsons, Kansas

LADIES WANTED to do fancy work. Easy, rapid; no experience. Steady work. Materials Furnished. *Free Sample* and particulars for 2c stamp. STANDARD MFG. CO., Dept. 12, Portland, Me.

CASH SALARY and all expenses to men with rig to introduce Guaranteed Poultry Remedies. Steady employment. Horse furnished when necessary. Unexperienced men need not apply. Must be honest and have best references. G. R. SIEGEL CO., 1 Elm, Springfield, Ill.

BOYS AND GIRLS earn money after school, or vacation. We will start you in business selling two great necessities. Valuable outfit free. Write quick for territory. GREEN & CO., 15 State St., Chicago

AGENTS WANTED

We want Agents to sell Dr. Nash-To-Bedo Suits and Pants. Suits $3.75, Pants $1.00. If you can't sell them we give you your money. Give us the right kind of a proposition and we will show you some cloth, particulars and territory.

Warrington Textile & Worsted Mills, Dept. 15, Chicago, Ill.

When answering advertisements you will ever like advertiser and the publishers by mentioning The Chicago Ledger.

Miss Gunner—When you see a pedestrian running between two automobiles it is a game of chance if he will reach the other side.

Mr. Guyer—Yes, a regular toss-up.

Possible Advantage.

Wedderly—Can the girl you are engaged to swim?

Singleton—I don't know. But why do you ask?

Wedderly—Because if she can you ought to be happy. A girl who can swim can keep her mouth shut.

Modern Version.

The prodigal son had just sneaked in the back way between two days.

"Owing to the greediness of the beef trust," explained the old man, "we are entirely out of fatted calf, but here's a can opener. Get busy."

Much the Same.

"Did you ever buy a gold brick?" ask the very young man.

"Well," replied the man with the scanty hair, "several years ago I married a girl whose father declared she was worth her weight in gold."

From Bad to Worse.

He—Miss Highnote is certainly a homely girl, isn't she?

She—Well, she isn't a beauty, but when you hear her sing you will forget her face.

He—Gracious! Is her singing as bad as that?

Nothing but the Truth.

His Wife (angrily)—So you have nothing but your income. When you proposed to me you said you had money to burn.

Her Husband—And I told you the truth, my dear. Haven't I just paid for a ton of coal?

Reminded Her.

"This is certainly grand," said the very young man at the football game.

"Yes, perfectly splendid," rejoined his fair companion. "It reminds me of the rush at a bargain sale."

Under the Chestnut Tree.

Young Sapleigh—Miss Eldridge tells me her family tree is old.

Miss Knox—Yes; it's certainly a large chestnut.

One Way to Do It.

Reverend Mr. Coldwater (vehemently)—No, sir; this country will never be fit to live in until it has more churches than dram-shops!

Alderman O'Donegal—Well, who's hinderin' ye in buildin' more churches?

Her Loss.

Gladys—Edith is so sorry she took Herbert's ring back to price it.

Penelope—Why so?

Gladys—Why, the jeweler said seeing Herbert hadn't been in to settle for it as he promised he guessed he'd keep it.

NO COFFEE

The Doctor Said.

Coffee slavery is not much different from alcohol or any other drug. But many people don't realize that coffee contains a poisonous, habit-forming drug—caffeine.

They get into the habit of using coffee, and no wonder, when some writers for respectable magazines and papers speak of coffee as "harmless."

Of course it doesn't paralyze one in a short time like alcohol, or put one to sleep like morphine, but it slowly acts on the heart, kidneys and nerves, and soon forms a drug-habit, just the same, and one that is the cause of many overlooked ailments.

"I wish to state for the benefit of other coffee slaves," writes a Vermont young lady, "what Postum Food Coffee has done for me.

"Up to a year ago I thought I could not eat my breakfast if I did not have at least two cups of coffee, and sometimes during the day, if very tired, I would have another cup.

"I was annoyed with indigestion, heart trouble, bad feeling in my head, and sleeplessness. Our family doctor, whom I consulted, asked me if I drank coffee. I said I did and could not get along without it.

"He told me it was the direct cause of my ailments, and advised me to drink Postum. I had no faith in it, but finally tried it. The first cup was not boiled long enough and was distasteful, and I vowed I would not drink any more.

"But after a neighbor told me to cook it longer I found Postum was much superior in flavor to my coffee. I am no longer nervous, my stomach troubles have ceased, my heart action is fine, and from 135 pounds weight when I began Postum, I now weigh 158 pounds. I give all the credit to Postum as I did not change my other diet in any way." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich. Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a reason."

Sound Advice.

A farmer wrote to the editor of the Farmers' Friend this letter:

"Mr. Editor:—I have a horse that has been afflicted for the past year with periodical fits of dizziness. Please answer through your valuable paper, and let me know what I should do with him, as he seems to get worse instead of better. I am afraid he will be unfit for work if something is not done soon."

The editor replied in the next issue as follows:

"Our honest advice, based on a careful perusal of that excellent work, 'Every Man His Own Horse-doctor,' would be to take this horse to some person he is not dizzy and sell him to a stranger."

Not Just the Right Place.

A bashful young couple who were evidently very much in love, entered a crowded street car.

"Do you suppose we can squeeze in here?" he asked, looking doubtfully at her blushing face.

"Don't you think, dear, we had better wait until we get home?" was the low, embarrassed reply.

Undoubtedly.

"Yes," observed the party who occasionally thinks aloud, "any man would!"

"Any man would what?" queried the curious individual.

"Would rather feel his oats than his corns," explained the noisy thinker.

A NATURAL QUESTION.

First Cowpuncher—Does she know anything about horses?

Second Cowpuncher—Well, the other day she asked me if we fed our horses hoss radish.

JOLLITY

An Unanswerable Argument.

Mrs. Noeash—I don't see why you can't be more careful. You might save a good deal out of your income if you'd try.

Mr. Noeash—Huh! Look at Lighthead. He saved up $3,000 and went to a horse-race yesterday, bet on the wrong horse and lost every cent of it. Now he's dead—killed himself. I was there with him, and lost all I had, too, but it wasn't enough to bother about.

The Annual Rest.

Young Husband—My dear, after a year of unremitting labor and closest economy, we have, I find, succeeded in saving about $300. What shall we do with it?

Young Wife—Well, my dear, we both need rest. Let's go to a pleasure resort for a week.

Doctors and Doctors.

First Citizen—Why don't you get Doctor Brownstone for your son? He must be a good physician, for he has a large practice among the Four Hundred.

Second Citizen—Oh, he wouldn't do at all. I want a brain specialist.

Science Always Ready.

Caller—Doctor, Mr. Divine, the muscle-reader, fell into a sort of trance a little while ago, and we cannot arouse him. Is it catalepsy, or death?

Doctor (a great scientist)—Bring me his head and I'll soon tell you.

Shows Appreciation.

Singleton—Youngwife certainly says a great many flattering things about his wife, doesn't he?

Oldbach—That's what. Why, he brags about her as much as a man does about a horse he wants to sell.

Miss Pig—Alas, how sad and lonely is my lot! No one loves me. I guess it is because I am not good-looking.

Mr. Bear—Well, you look good to me.

A Lucky Escape.

Wife—Weren't you awfully frightened, dear, when you made your first political speech the other night?

Candidate—Yes; but I got through safely.

Wife—Safely?

Candidate—Yes, before anybody yelled for me to sit down.

An Unprofitable Task.

Mrs. Gadd—You look tired, Mrs. Gabb. What is the matter?

Mrs. Gabb.—Tired! I'm nearly dead. I've sat at my bathroom window for seven weeks right along, listening to the sounds in the parsonage next door, and I haven't heard a cross word yet.

Ladies, Preserve Your Youthful Appearance.

Madame Mignette's Beauty Cream and Skin Food removes every defect, spot, freckle, pimple, blemish or wrinkle, leaving the skin soft, clear and smooth. It is perfectly harmless and will not injure the most delicate skin. It preserves and brings back the youthful glow to the face and ruddiness to the cheeks, preserving it in this condition until extreme old age. This preparation has been used for years and hundreds are now using it and are more than delighted with the results.

Send ten (10) cents for formula which you can have filled at any drug store at a very small cost. Do not delay, but write at once. Box 681, Blairsville, Pa.

Not His Fault.

His Wife (a year later)—When you proposed to me you said all I'd have to do if I married you would be to sit around and look pretty. But alas, how very different!"

Her Husband—"Well, it isn't my fault if you can't look pretty any more."

So Nice of Him.

Gunner—The pretty little poetess is blushing.

Guyer—Yes, she sent a poem to the editor called, "The Kiss."

Gunner—Well?

Guyer—Why, he returned it.

Where the Work Comes In.

Minister's Wife—You haven't been out of your study an hour this week. What is the matter?

Minister—Some of the congregation say my sermons are too long, and I've been trying to write a short one.

The Lawyer—Did your husband die intestate, madam?

The Widow—Yes, I believe the doctors said it was some sort of intestinal trouble.

A Gentle Hint.

Paterfamilias (severely)—There was a young gentleman with you in the parlor last night?

Sweet Girl (gently)—Yes, pa—Mr. Stayer.

Paterfamilias—And it was after eleven before he went home, miss. I'd like to know what kept him so late?

Sweet Girl—Well, pa, you looked so angrily at me when you came in and saw him that I guess he thought I needed a protector, and so he stayed until he thought you were asleep.

Sure to Jump.

Gunner—Always jump out of bed on time, eh? Have you a good alarm clock?

Guyer—Oh, I have something better than that. I have an automobile horn by my bed that toots by compressed air at a certain hour and then I jump five feet.

The Difference.

Small Boy—Pa, what is the difference between a pessimist and an optimist?

Pa—Well, let me see if I can illustrate. You know I am often discouraged, and things don't look to me as if they'd ever go right. Well, at such times I can be said to be a pessimist. But years ago, when I was a young man, everything looked bright and rosy, and I was always hopeful. Then I was an optimist. Now, my son, can you understand the difference between a pessimist and an optimist?

Small Boy—Oh, yes; one is married and the other isn't.

Possible Explanation.

The Heiress—The majority of artists are poor. I wonder why?

The Count—I presume it's because most of them marry for beauty.

Myer—Did you ever happen to know a woman that was good at figures?

Gyer—Only one.

Myer—And who was she?

Gyer—A dressmaker.

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AGENTS Sell Farmers Tools

Wanted for our Famous Steel Combination Handles, Wire Cutter, Staple Puller, etc., 6 tools in one. Farmers need them. You can sell more than 6 times a day. Sells at sight to every member of family. Agents sell as high as fifty a day. Gets a complete outfit. Why work for small wages when you can make big money? Write quick—secure territory. Send 50c for sample and outfit. Send Stamp for catalogue. Address Interstate Bottoner Machine, 1 to 1 Live Selling Tool Expt. Write today for catalog of novelties, specialties and household goods.

WRITE FOR CATALOGUE

A. E. Field Novelty Co., Dept. 666, Fredonia, N. Y.

Earn $8 A DAY SELLING OUR MARVELOUS CLOTH SCOTT, CONOVER, N. Y.

WE PAY $36 A WEEK AND EXPENSES IMPERIAL MFG. CO., DEPT. 7 PARSONS, KANS.

AGENTS, CHEDDY, Perfumes, Flavors, etc. Big profits. Express Paid. Free Prize. Herbert Agency Co., Box 201, Sta'n L, New York

$36 A WEEK AND EXPENSES TO MEN with rig to introduce our Poultry Foods. JAVELLE CO., Dept. 29, PARSONS, Kansas

AGENTS to sell the Specialty Easy Floor Cleaner. Slipcover and accident money getter ever heard of. E. HILKER, CHICAGO

AGENTS—PORTRAITS on PILLOW TOPS

An absolutely novel and sure seller—no better agent's proposition before you. Big prospects for no-collector—nobody else in the field. We treat agents squarely; guarantee satisfaction. Write for terms. Sample 25c.

BERLIN ENGR. CO., 632 W. Madison St., CHICAGO

FREE DRESS SKIRT absolutely free to taking 4 ord'rs. Send for Free Sam., allies and tape measure. **WANTED** everywhere. Make $2 to $5 per day. JENNES & OB, 124 Van Buren Street, CHICAGO, ILL.

AGENTS

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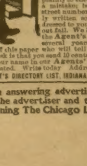

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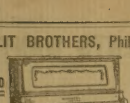

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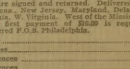

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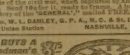

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MAN OR DEVIL;

OR, THE MYSTERY OF TWIN PEAKS.

By GEORGE WEYMOUTH.

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Begun in No. 45, Nov. 10. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER XII.

How it happened, I do not know. I can make no attempts at explanation.

But at that moment, as I stood with my dear girl in my arms, waiting for the fatal three minutes to expire when the explosive would shatter the east side of the house—at that moment a miracle occurred.

Mr. Chumley stood before us.

There was a light in the room, and the man was there—Mr. Chumley—and could be.

Margaret also saw him.

"To the roof!" he cried. "Remember the trolley line!"

Then he disappeared.

He had some strange power, it seems, of projecting his apparent body through space. He had appeared earlier in the evening in Seminrud, and had led the black woman to where I was bound beneath the tree. I thought she had been dreaming, for the shade was not visible to my eyes.

But now, I, too, had seen him.

"Remember the trolley line," was his advice, and it came in the nick of time.

Instantly a plan of escape flashed through my mind.

Why had I not thought of it before? Now, perhaps it would be too late.

We ran up the narrow stairway and stepped out upon the little platform which capped the stone house.

At the time of building the house I constructed this aerial railway for transporting heavy timbers to the top of the Twin Peaks.

It was of heavy wires laid on horizontal arms extending out from the tops of cedar posts.

Most of the way up it ran about twenty feet above the house.

The steel basket that swung on the pulleys was strong enough to be large enough to hold us both. I had no fear of its giving way, because I had carried the piano up the hill by the self-same way.

Fortunately the basket was now swinging on its wires at the top of the house.

The cable that held it was wound around a big cylinder.

All we had to do was to step in the basket and release the ratchet or catch that held the cylinder and keep it from revolving. When this was released, the cable would unwind, and our weight would cause the basket to glide down the hill, increasing its speed until before we reached the bottom we would be riding on the wind.

It takes time to explain all this, but it only took us seconds to do it.

As we reached the little platform on the top of the house, I heard Colonel Smith exclaim:

"There they are, on top of the house!"

I glanced down at Colonel Smith's voice, and saw the six men standing by the fence on the side opposite the door where the dynamite had been planted.

"One minute to live," he shouted.

"They will be free, darling. We shall yet be saved," I whispered.

"Get into the basket at once, and I will release the car."

She climbed lightly into the wire carrier. I threw up the catch with my unwounded left arm, and leaped in just as the cylinder began to unwind.

"The time is at hand," shouted Colonel Smith gleefully.

"Help me!" cried another voice. "They are going down the wire."

We were free. We fled from the house, and the speed of the wire cage was increasing every moment.

I saw Smith lean toward the fence and seize one of the guns and turn to fire at us.

At the same instant the explosion of dynamite took place at the front door.

It was apparent that the charge of explosive had not been meant to destroy the house completely, but only to effect my entrance, by demolishing that part of the building.

The detonation was tremendous, however. A shower of earth and mortar and fragments of stone fell on the roof covering the car, but fortunately we were not hurt.

But we were threatened by a danger that we had not anticipated.

When the door of the house was blown in, the sudden air pressure beat out upon the circular stairway and out through the roof of the stone building.

It was much like a choke-bored gun-barrel. The air was held in by the heavy walls, and the weak part of the roof, giving way at the top, the force of the discharge exhausted itself through the opening.

The pressure was so tremendous that the whole top of the house was blown out.

The timbers to which the wires were anchored gave way and collapsed—the drum cylinder was thrown high in the air, and the wire cable that held the car was broken.

If we had not escaped from the house a few seconds before the explosion, our end would have been horrible and inevitable.

As it was we escaped only by the merest fraction.

Our car lurched as the supports gave way, and it would have shot to the ground only we had now reached the first post on which the wires were strung. The staples held, and our car still remained in position.

But the cable that held it was broken, and there was nothing to retard our progress.

The trolleys spun and b-r-r-r-d on the wires with frightful velocity, and the car leaped down the incline like a wild and frightened bird.

Before the sound of the explosion ceased to echo we were over the top of the iron fence and spinning onward at a breathless rate.

CHAPTER XIII.

It was then that another miracle happened—one so strange and awful that I even yet shudder to think about it.

In reality, all that I have been telling and what I am about to tell, occurred in far less space of time than seconds.

But the mind in times of crisis becomes so acute—lifts a layer and quickens at so high a pitch—that time seems to stand still.

I have an impression that hours elapsed instead of seconds after we saw Mr. Chumley's spectral shape and before the grand catastrophe occurred.

I remember that Margaret clung to me as our car passed the first post, and sped down for our precipitous flight to the valley.

I looked above me and saw that the stars were shining and twinkling in a friendly way.

Not a cloud obscured the clear autumn sky.

I looked at Colonel Smith and his band of villains.

They were huddled in a group by the fence and looking toward us.

They seemed paralyzed into inaction by our sudden escape.

The Colonel himself was the first to recover.

He lifted his gun and fired at us. Instantly I ducked my head, and turned

was Burton and his posse, just ready to make their sally to the rescue. They had stopped at the house to telephone me, and they had seen the explosion and had dimly witnessed our flight from the top of the porch perch.

When they helped us down I was unable to stand and Margaret lay in a dead faint.

Fortunately, the dear girl had been spared the terrors of the wild ride. She knew nothing of the lightning stroke until days afterward when we told her.

CHAPTER XIV.

[illegible] reclining on a cozy [illegible] ant sitting near. My [illegible] and bound closely to [illegible] the wound left [illegible] for the doctor had just dressed it.

"It is a simple fracture [illegible] nicely," he said as he left me, "[illegible] nothing to do but keep comfortable and [illegible]

"And Miss Chumley—how did you find her this morning?"

[illegible] dressed and will soon be downstairs. [illegible] entered from the shock, as she [illegible] the wound compunction and a row

"Then he looked [illegible] ah twinkle [illegible]

[illegible]

A flash of happy [illegible] over me.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, that's all right, [illegible] soon have cause to congratulate [illegible] self too."

I never [illegible]

He chuckled [illegible] man whom I had kno[illegible] head.

I lay there [illegible]

Then the door opened softly and a man came into the room.

It was Mr. Chumley—or his specter. I did not know which, so I lay in silence and looked at him with inquiring eyes.

He smiled at me.

"Tired, old man, Graeme, my boy?" he asked, tenderly, advancing and holding out his strong white hand.

"It is really you, then, this time?" I asked.

"If really I, Graeme. And I am glad to see you so well. What is it? A broken [illegible]

"Yes, Mr. Chumley."

"And Margaret is all right, I am told?"

"Yes, she she is all right."

"I have to thank you for much, Graeme." His voice [illegible] grave and deep and full of meaning.

"And the kindness of Heaven." I murmured. "Do not thank me."

"I know when I first saw you, that you were an honest [illegible] that we would be great friends. I felt that our destinies were intermingled, Graeme. There is nothing more I can say."

He sat down in the chair by the side of my couch and looked at me for a time in silence.

"Do you want to know how it all happened?" I asked.

He smiled almost sadly.

"I think I know all," he said.

"Then you were there that night—it was you, on your spirit, that appeared to Serjeramis and led her to my rescue? It was you that saved me and me in the [illegible] stone house and reminded us of the wire [illegible]

He looked at me meditatively for a moment, as if wondering what to say.

"Partly so," he said at last. "I have been delving in mysteries and have been to learn the [illegible] that were [illegible] for human knowledge. There are some things that might better not be known, and I never better intention. The knowledge that I have gained of the unseen influence [illegible] around us has not brought me happiness, Graeme. It led me into danger, and if, at the last, through the kindness of Heaven it has saved my [illegible] mine, the evil has not been a light one."

"You do not call it [illegible] mean?"

"No; I will not tell you. I am done with it, Graeme. I have no wealth, and I have yet won his old benevolent spirit shining in his [illegible]

"I am done with it forever," he continued. "I shall pass the remainder of my life in peaceful and obscure [illegible] I shall do what good I may with my money and with my knowledge, but I shall dabble no more with deep things. I am weary of all mysteries. To pass the few remaining days of life with the one I love, to bask in the warmth of human love is enough for me.

"Your days will be many, Mr. Chumley, for—"

He smiled at me, and interrupted by laying the hand on my forehead.

"I shall not be here long, my boy. A man once [illegible] the forces that rule the world—as I have done during the last few days—without paying the penalty. The human [illegible] is not able to stand the rack and strain of superhuman influences. But [illegible] my boy, I am not filled with regrets. I have lived my life and it has been a [illegible] and in time to come I shall know more clearly the things I have just been able to glimpse, but at present wholesome human love and sympathy are enough for me.

"I have been wondering and waiting for you to explain things to me," I said. "Perhaps I am a little disappointed that you will not, but I believe you are right. I am not a mystic, and I will be satisfied and happy if you will [illegible] the love of——"

I stopped and looked at him, uncertain how to proceed.

He smiled at me encouragingly.

"You know, sir, I——"

Then the door opened and Margaret came in.

CHAPTER XV.

The dear girl was slightly pale, but this only seemed to increase her beauty. In the short time I had known her we had gone through such adventures together that our companionship seemed as old as the world.

When she [illegible] her father she stopped with a little [illegible]

Then she [illegible] up to him and threw her [illegible] neck and hid her face on his [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] over."

"You have no more enemi[illegible]

"Not another one in the world," he said [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] rosy with blushes, and the [illegible] refused to [illegible] too strong for [illegible] nevermore [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[

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THE BANDITS OF NEEDLE PEAK.

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Begun in No. 46, Nov. 17. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER V.

OVERHEARING THE PLOT.

Dora had seen Bill's action and divined his purpose. She made a quick jump to one side, avoiding the bullet that came crashing close to her head.

For a moment she thought that Bill was aware of her presence and meant the shot for her, but there was something about his manner that struck her as being singular. She waited to see what his next move would be before opening fire upon him, but Bill merely turned on his heel and walked over to the cage containing the wild mountain lions. This move on his part indicated that Bill fired his revolver merely as a relief to his feelings after the supposed encounter with the ghost.

The girl crept as near the entrance as she dared, to see what Bill was going to do next. He leaned against the bars of the cage and began to deliver a monologue to one of his favorite lions.

The animal seemed to recognize its master and permitted him to put its head without making any attempt to resent Bill's affectionate caress, as Dora expected might be the case.

"Hungry, eh?" asked Bill of the vicious looking beast, as if it were a human being and had the power of answering. "Well, now, you will soon have a tender piece of meat when I bring Mark Powers for you to feed upon."

"What's that?" exclaimed Dora under her breath. She leaned forward as far as she dared, to catch every word that Bill should utter aloud.

"You will get a chance to chew up the whole bunch in a few minutes more," continued Bill, addressing the evil looking beasts. "They're all waiting near the hole where their leader fell through the trap I set for him, and my gang will soon gather them in, like a bunch of fish in a net."

"What trap is he speaking about?" thought Dora, who did not know, of course, what had befallen Mark since he rode away from her ranch at Pine Bluff.

"You see, I'm like Uncle Yellow Boy," said Bill, gravely, calling the mountain lion by name, "Mark Powers got through with a little trap I fixed for him, and is waiting in my reception room for me to go and catch him here so as to make your acquaintance, Mr. Lion."

"What his prisoner?" exclaimed the cowgirl in surprise.

She scrutinized Bill's face, and noticed a grin of triumph on his evil countenance.

"He won't be bad eatin', 'cause he is a young and tender chap," Bill went on. "When I get this bunch of cowboys in the here cage I will have a fine time watching my yellow beauties chew them up one by one. That will be the jolliest sport I ever had."

"This man is a monster in human shape," muttered Dora in indignation.

Her first impulse was to cover Bill with her revolver and tell him to throw up his hands, then march him to the entrance of the cave and turn him over to the band of cowboys.

"And they must be warned of the dangerous plot to entrap them that Bill has planned," she thought.

Then it came to her like a flash that she was in danger herself as soon as he was to escape from the cavern as she had been half an hour before.

Just then Bill went on with his strange monologue, and she heard something that filled her with horror and made her think of how she could save Mark instead of trying to baffle Bill and means of escaping from the cavern.

"Well, I have a puzzle for that young man to puzzle over," Bill was saying. "I am going to put him in the center of the cage and tell him that the only confinement which he can escape from is through the small crawl through and get out. I will keep him guessing for while one of these hungry beauties is going to get him for supper!"

This fiendish plan was more than cruelty, and seems to delight in inventing new tortures for his helpless victims.

"I will fix the cage now that has the little joker in it," chuckled Bill.

He stepped in front of him and walked boldly in where the lion he had just been petting was pacing up and down, growling savagely. Bill paid no attention to the beast, but took the combination out of a person used to enter the den of a hungry beast. It was not at all strange that he should do this, for in the days before he became an outlaw, he traveled with a band of acrobats and animals, being considered the most daring lion-tamer of his time.

He strode over to the back of the cage where a trap door hung suspended from the ceiling. Bill drew a bolt from the side which released the door at the bottom. The ingenious working of the compartment was thus enabled to put its muzzle to the door and open it by simply moving forward and pushing its body through the opening. The doors of the other cages were closed.

This preliminary being disposed of, Bill left the cage.

"I will go and get Mark Powers now," said Cougar Bill.

Dora was at the point of following him to see where Mark was confined, when the cowboy chief turned into the darkness. Bill uttered a curse, and started off to investigate the cause of the disturbance.

The young cowgirl stepped forward to ... close behind, but Bill's exit was made ... and he did not call the direc-

"Mark's life is in great danger. I must ... save him," she exclaimed. "I have it! I will kill the lion which Bill locked out for the purpose of making away with Mark, and bring their corpses. I will have to leave this place now for fear that Bill comes back unexpectedly with Mark and thwarts ... is to use a ... with Mark ... finds out that Dora ... once has a ...

She listened a moment to make sure that ... in that part of the cavern but ... She hastily fell in her pocket and ... forth a small vial containing phosphorus, which she had bought in town that day to use in some chemical experiments she was conducting at home.

The strongest solution that was exposed to the air it shed a blue light over her clothes and the objects near her.

"This will help me to carry out my plan," she muttered.

Dora shook two large pieces out of the bottle and rubbed them together in the palm of her hand. They were about the size of a fifteen cent piece, and looked like a couple of live coals.

She glanced towards the cage and saw the eight pairs of eyes glowing like fire in the surrounding darkness.

As she advanced to the door of the cage she exclaimed:

"I will kill one of the lions and use this chemical on its eyes to make Bill think when he comes back that the animal is still alive."

She drew her knife and advanced stealthily towards the cage. Then she held between the two pieces of phosphorus in the bottle and returned it to her pocket.

She did not know that the real Mark Powers was grappling with the madman, and that the one she was about to save from being torn to pieces by a ravenous mountain lion was a person whom she had never seen in her life.

Nevertheless, Dora would have attempted to release that unfortunate from the blood-stained hands of such a cowardly murderer as Cougar Bill, and would have been willing to stake her life to accomplish it.

Clutching the silver-handled bowie knife in a steady grasp she advanced towards the cage of the wild beast. She had previously observed how Bill had unfastened the catch, and now she opened the door without being obliged to lose any time fumbling around to find the spring catch releasing the bolt.

The animal sniffed at her skirt the moment she came in range of its nose. With an angry snarl he thrust out his paw, the long tawny tassels of which looked wicked-looking, and made a vicious attempt to claw her side.

But Dora had expected such a move and was on her guard. She gave the lion a jab with the point of her bowie knife, which made it turn and sink to the other end of the cage. She did not want to cause the beast any unnecessary pain, but something had to be done to keep it away from the door, so that she could unfasten it without being molested.

The beast's cry was responded to by a chorus of snarls and growls from the others, who woke the night echoes for several minutes after the injured lion ceased making his loud protests.

Sixteen gleaming eyeballs were turned in the direction of the intrepid girl, and it was fortunate for her that their owners could not get within reach of her sword.

The animal had set up such a terrific din that the noise could be heard in every corridor in the vicinity.

Dora ran to cover until it should subside for she knew that Bill would rush back with a torch or a lantern to discover the cause of the unusual commotion.

She barely reached the corridor from which she had been watching the ex-lion tamer previous to Bill's return when his voice could be heard on the other side of the cavern crying out:

"Curse you! Stop that racket. What's the matter, anyway? Where's my light? The confounded lanterns can't be filled as the oil in the supply house has been used up."

"That's good," exclaimed Dora in delight. "now there is no danger that my plot will be discovered. I hope he will go away long enough for me to seize that vicious beast."

Cougar Bill advanced to the cage and struck a match. It flared up for a second and then went out before he could see the inside with any degree of distinctness. He struck another match, and apparently everything seemed to be as he had left it, for he only grunted and turned on his heel.

Dora glided to the entrance and she heard his footsteps echo but faintly on the ground on the other side, away to her right.

She quickly opened the door of the cage, and with the knife in her hand—for she did not dare to waste a second for fear of raising an alarm—the brave girl confronted the lion hungry for blood.

She had boarded the lion in his den!

CHAPTER VI.

DORA IN THE LION'S DEN.

The ... stepped inside the ... the door behind him. ... part startled the mountain lion for a moment, and had the effect of making him retreat to the farther ... the other side. But he did not remain long ... in the corner of the cage. After crouching ... a second for a spring, he uttered an ... growl and leaped for the girl. ... had dropped upon one knee and ... herself for the encounter the ...

... ed and leaped for the girl. ... had dropped upon one knee and ... herself for the encounter the ... ed and leaped for the girl. ... ed and leaped for the girl. ... had dropped upon one knee and ... herself for the encounter the

with it, for the instant the point of the sharp steel pricked the skin of the animal the blood spurted forth and in a steady stream.

She advanced cautiously to the spot where the lion lay, taking pains to be out of range of its claws, and listened to its cries of agony to try to find out if the animal still had enough strength to do her harm.

Suddenly she started back and assumed an attitude of defense, for the lion had risen on its feet to do battle once more with the enemy that had dealt it such a fatal blow. It sniffed and lashed its tail, and gathered itself for one final spring.

The girl braced her arm and took a firmer hold of the knife.

"This ends will tell the tale," she said, as she steadied herself for the fierce lunge of the dying beast.

The growls and hoarse cries which it uttered did not unnerve her as they might have done a strong man in place in the same dangerous situation.

"Mark's life depends upon my killing it," she reflected, thinking of his danger and giving no thought to her own peril. Her consideration for the safety of the Bandit Scourge braced the nerves of the unselfish girl and gave her arm the strength of two men.

The mountain lion gauged the distance between itself and Dora for one brief instant, and then sprang forward with a shrill scream. Dora, who had been watching for the shining eyes, threw herself to one side as the animal flew by. She struck once, and soon, for the whole thing was done as quick as lightning.

A cry of disappointed rage rent the air. The mountain lion knew that he had met his match, and that he was growing weaker every minute from the loss of blood. The beast's natural instinctive fear he had lost and was completely in the power of his antagonist.

The second time the animal jumped for the girl she barely had a chance to dodge the pain and wounds he had, and was unable to use her knife; but fortunately in the first encounter she had managed to deliver a blow that drove the knife to a vital spot.

If she had failed to touch the catamount or had only wounded it slightly it would have ended in her death. But a cool head and a steady hand gave her the victory.

The lion lay huddled up where it had landed after leaving its prey, its eyes glued on Dora, who stood in the middle of the room, ready for its death struggles.

"It's all in, I guess," she said. "Oh, but that was the hardest battle I ever had to with man or beast! But, thank Heaven, I came out victor, for Mark's sake."

The excitement began to tell upon her by this time, and she sat down upon the cold, rough floor of the cage completely exhausted. The lion lay in a pool of its own blood unable to move, but it kept a watchful eye on the girl to the last. Once or twice it made an effort to get up and spring at her, but its legs would not work that it immediately fell back on its haunches.

A final gasp and Cougar Bill's favorite lion was dead.

Dora, cautiously over to the body, knife in hand, prepared for any unknown danger, and standing upon it to make sure that it was really dead. Satisfying herself on this score, she dragged it to the swinging door opening on the circular space in the center of the cage.

"I must hurry or Bill will get back before I have a chance to arrange things, and he will discover all."

She worked like a Trojan to put the body of the lion in such a position that it would appear at a casual glance as if the animal were still alive, and watching the open space in the inner part of the cage where Mark was to be thrust later on.

She stretched out the forepaws and placed the large, shaggy head between them, giving the lion all the semblance of watching for its prey. The only thing remaining to complete the deception was to make the eyes look as if they still shone with the peculiar light that had made the animal appear so ferocious during the battle in the dark.

Dora drew the phosphorus from the bottle in her pocket and rubbed the two pieces together to make them shine brilliantly.

After fastening one in the socket of each eye she crawled quietly through the opening and stood in the center of the cage to see how the effect was.

"Good!" she exclaimed after her examination. "Unless tiffs lamps are lighted no one, not Bill himself, could tell whether those glowing pieces of phosphorus are the real eyes or not. I will take chances of the outcome of this trick."

The angry growls of the seven other mountain lions made so much noise that no one could tell whether it came from the compartment she had just left or not.

Hark!

The sound of footsteps and the distant hum of conversation could be heard coming from the other end of the corridor.

Dora ran hastily outside and concealed herself beside the body of the lion.

The sounds came nearer and nearer, till at last she recognized the voice of Cougar Bill. He was talking to a prisoner whom he believed to be Mark Powers to the cage of hungry mountain lions, intending to cast him into the midst of the ravenous beasts to fight for his life in a one-sided combat. Cougar Bill was filled with the vision in the enclosure and released the savage beasts.

"I've got a surprise for you other than you thought I would," Dora heard Cougar Bill say to the man. "Instead of Mark Powers," when I showed myself you didn't appear to be so glad to see me, did you? Well, that sounds comfortable. Have you any hard feelings for that?"

"Never you mind, Cougar Bill, what you suppose are my feelings in the matter," replied his prisoner with haughty disdain.

Dora started at the voice with bated breath.

"That doesn't sound just like Mark's voice," she exclaimed. "And yet it must be, because I recognized Bill. But this is not Mark's prisoner and intended to throw him to his pet lions for their dinner."

She peered cautiously at the cabin every sound, and heard Bill reply to his prisoner in sarcastic tones:

"You won't fly so high in just about two minutes when I give you a gentle push and let them coop down here on you with my friends for company."

"Untie my hands, you cowardly villain, and give me a chance for my life."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Bill brutally. "I thought you'd come down off your high horse and plead for mercy."

The young man's voice flashed fire at this taunt, and he retorted with a great deal of vehemence:

"Don't imagine that I intend to lower myself to your level. Perhaps you would like for me to untie the cables before turned. I would expect that from a cold-blooded coward who would bind his foes and uses such foul means of putting his enemy out of the way, as you are about to do with me now."

The only answer that Bill gave was a grunt, which, in his case, might have been intended to express either scorn or approval.

"Why don't you say something, you cur?" asked the prisoner, with a touch of pathos in a contemptuous voice.

"Take that!" cried Bill in a towering passion, as he gave his prisoner a cowardly blow across the face.

"Oh, if I only had my hands free for a second," exclaimed the young man. "If I wouldn't make you sorry for that blow I wouldn't dare do a thing like that if I had an equal chance with you."

"Well, you've got the chance, see!" And Bill fairly hissed the words in Pete's ear.

The prisoner then decided to pursue another tack in trying to win his captor to cut the cords, for that seemed to be the only chance he had. Then again, he wanted to gain time, for he knew he could bring his band of cowboys to his rescue.

"Look here, Bill," said he in a mollifying tone, "you misunderstood me. Don't you suppose I know that you have me dead to rights?"

"Of course I have," broke in Bill, his voice expressing considerable satisfaction. "I guess I know it, and don't have to be told."

"That's easy to see," replied Pete. "If any one looked in on us just now and saw me trussed up like a turkey they wouldn't have any doubts about your having everything your own way."

"Right again," interjected Bill, but in a tone not so sharp.

"I have given on more than one occasion that I can face danger without flinching, and I guess you will readily grant that I speak the truth if you don't let your hatred of me influence your judgment."

"What has this confab to do with the present situation?" questioned Bill.

"Just this," answered the prisoner. "I want to die as a brave man should, with my hands bound on. You can throw me into the lions all tied up like a bundle of firewood, let me walk in with my hands and face me calmly and courageously."

"That sounds reasonable."

"Of course it does."

"You're not squealing and expect after I do that that you are going to persuade me to let you go?"

"Certainly not," was the indignant reply. "I am not much on the soft-hearted business, as you have found out," said Bill, "and I don't want you to think that granting your request is going to be any lead to my letting you go."

The unusual request made quite an impression on the outlaw and as Pete had hoped, appealed to his spirit of bravado.

"I realize that my time has come and I can die like a man, Cougar Bill. This will be the last thing I ever expect to ask you, and I merely want you to grant the request of a man facing death."

"All right, but don't you try any funny trick on me."

"What makes you think I am apt to do that?"

Bill's voice was charged with a knowing cunning when he replied:

"Would it be natural if you didn't make some kind of a break to run for it or hit me a swipe over the head when your paws were free?"

"Oh, you can't always tell," was the evasive answer.

"Yes; and I know that it would be a poor spirited gent who never took a chance in such an interesting situation, me with the gun ready for you and you knowing that you are going to feed 'em in short order."

"I see you don't suppose that you are such a fool as to think otherwise. But I know you have the drop on me and I haven't the ghost of a show to put up a fight. So what's the use? say I."

"You're a gent with true sense, Mr. Powers," said the ex-lion-tamer.

"I've known that for a long time, but we have been so busy trying to get the drop on each other with a gun all the times we have met that it strikes a frail that we've had no leisure to become acquainted," laughed New Zealand Pete.

"To be sure," exclaimed Bill. "But, say, you seem to be a game sort after all."

"How so?"

"Why here you laugh and make a joke out of a situation as if you had no idea that I don't mean what I say."

"You've got me there. I have no mistaking a thing when you have made up your mind. And as for joking, things as they now stand now, why there doesn't seem to be any harm if a fellow wants to crack a joke in his extremity, is there?"

"Ha, ha!" No, there ain't, according to my way of thinking."

"Well, we appear to agree on one thing. If what you just said is true, and I have your word for it, I suppose you never go back on your word."

"You've that!" replied Cougar Bill, somewhat mystified.

"Why, it's only a matter of individual taste whether a man prefers to laugh or whimper when the other fellow has the drop on him. I for one have always believed that we should get as much fun out of life as possible."

"Right again, pardner," said Bill sententiously.

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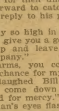

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"I sure will," guffawed Bill.

"Don't think that I am at all selfish, Bill, because it tickles me. I feel so generous that I would just as soon have you in there to keep me company, and get some of your own ribs accustomed, if it were so much fun."

"Well, there be one thing I like about you," said Bill.

"Glad to hear that there is at least one thing that you like about me. It certainly is the blackest surprise I ever had in my life, to find out that the man I have been chasing through Arizona and California, trying to get his scalp, was there in front something he likes about me, when I know that he hates me as I were so much poison. This looks like the time you are having your little fun at my expense."

"Oh, it's at your expense, all right. You'll find before I get through that I haven't left nothing undone. I've treated Cougar Bill with a meaning in his voice that the reporters would have to just take to understand. Don't hang onto any idea that I am losing sight of all that is coming to you, Mark Powers, for no just such thing. I like about you before you interrupted me."

"No shield, I am thinking, for what you have in store for me, but I will be as mum as an oyster till I hear the only compliment that Cougar Bill was ever known to make in his life."

"You'll have just this: You have shown up in better colors than I ever expected to see. I used to think that Mark Powers was the kind that tries to bluff out of a tight corner by trying to get on your dignity and talking dictionary words to the poor man, like myself, knows anything about."

"Is that all?" queried his prisoner.

"Sure thing," said Bill. "But I keep an eye on those fists, too, you know. I've heard that that are working a racket to deceive people and make them believe that they are having a fight with some big, mad any cotton-tailed rabbit."

"That is a view of the matter that never occurred to me before. You reason it out like a philosopher."

"Hold on, there!" commanded Bill, who thought he detected a little sarcasm in Pete's voice. "Don't get to be a regular one of them dictionary words on me or I opine I'll think I have the pre-fluffs about me I just said about."

"Just as you say—anything to oblige. You won't have nothing like it from yours truly; but my opinion of you won't change."

"Huh!" grunted Bill, skeptically, not quite sure but that there was some hidden meaning in the words not quite complimentary to himself.

"No offense—you know what I mean."

"What I was going to say was that when you start to laugh and be enjoying things when you are dead certain you are going to have the best of the situation, I say, you show clear grit. And I always admire chaps who can do that."

Pete felt sure that his pet hopeful words and thought that Bill had begun to relent. He did not let the affair go so far as such a "freier" to see if Bill was in the humor to release him, though not willing to say too much for fear of arousing Bill's suspicions as to the hopes he now began to entertain.

"You never find me objecting to any good points in an enemy interfere with your plans for getting even, Bill Breriter, I suppose?" the young man asked carelessly.

"You bet I don't," quickly replied Bill. "But I am going to make a big concession in your case. Just to show that I think you ought to have a little courtesy shown for them good points I have been observing in you."

"What is it?" asked Pete eagerly.

"Why, I decided to do what you just asks me."

"I don't remember," replied the prisoner, hardly daring to hope that he had brought Bill around to such a point of good humor that he intended to give him his liberty. "I will set commit myself," he reflected, "but will wait for Bill to show his hand."

"Of course you remember," urged Bill.

"I have a poor memory. It's up to you to spring the surprise on me."

"Well, it's this: I'm going to cut these ropes on your arms so's you can walk in the cage to visit those frisky pets of mine, as you wanted. Ha, ha, ha! The joke's on you this time."

It was quite evident from his speech that Cougar Bill was the same cruel and cunning villain, and had been bantering his prisoner to make him believe that his feelings were easily moved to considerations of mercy.

But Pete had not been wholly deceived, though he had to admit to himself that for a moment he was on the point of thinking some great change of heart was about to take place in the blood-sucker.

Had the cavern been lighted so that they could have seen each other's faces, Cougar Bill would have been able to detect a look of surprise overspread the prisoner's countenance for a moment; and he would have rejoiced at the others supposed discomfiture. But he did not have such an opportunity.

Pete saw no chance of escaping Bill's clutches other than by sticking to his purpose of engaging the outlaw in conversation till Mark could work up his band of cowboys.

"It course, the joke's on me, as I said before," replied Pete, taking care not to let the slightest note of disappointment at the unexpected turn of affairs.

Bill cautioned the young man to make no move in the direction of a weapon, or that he was on his guard against any such demonstration.

"I'd rather be knocked in the head at once with the butt of your revolver than get shot slowly to death from home, so it seems to me that your threat is a very funny one."

"Is it?" returned Bill. "Well, I will just say this much for you, that it would be worse than that. When you woke up you would find that I had something better in store for you than that."

"I thought you intended that I was to unlock the cage door and let your pets out of it."

"It is so far, but I reckon that in a case of necessity my inventive genius would be found in good working order."

"What would be the case," questioned the young man.

"Never you mind, sonny, what it is. All I have to say for you is not to put me to the trouble."

Here was on the point of making a suitable reply when both men heard a slight noise that sounded like faint footsteps coming from a distant corridor.

They both stopped and listened.

There was sure that Mark had returned to rescue him at last; while Cougar Bill decided that the noise was the rattling that made him start as if he had heard it before, and he made haste to enter the passage advancing towards the two men.

"Mark Powers!" thought the prisoner, "I won't have to talk and play for you any time."

He felt so sure that it was Mark—though he could not account for the sound of only one pair of feet preceded the idea that the young man had returned accompanied by his band of cowboys—that he was ready to hurl a shout of defiance at Bill, and reveal to him the fact that he was talking to any time. But his life on the plains had taught him the value of caution, and the folly of jumping to conclusions.

Consequently, when the incident pass as if he had not heard anything.

But Bill trembled, as if nervously suppressed excitement, for he seemed to know to be unconquerable.

"The footsteps of the ghost!" he whispered hoarsely.

Though very much frightened he retained sufficient presence of mind to regret his bloody purpose toward the young man in his power.

He hastily opened the grated door of the cage and thrust his knife inside without cutting the rope securing his prisoner's hands.

"You die the way I planned, after all, if I prove the real murderer."

Pete thought that his last hour had really arrived, but still he gave way as he walked steadily to the center of the cage. He expected to hear the angry growl of a hungry mountain lion, and feel the claws of the ferocious beast tear his flesh before another minute passed.

"Too late," he signed, as he listened to a chorus of howls issuing from all sides. "Mark Powers did not intend to desert me, but even if he were here now he would be powerless to save me."

This story, which is one of the most exciting recently written, will be continued in the Ledger issue of next week. Do not fail to read it to the end. If you are not already a subscriber, we urge you to send in your subscription and get the remainder of this captivating story and other thrilling masterpieces that are about to appear in these pages. Boys and girls may desire our free catalogue, as announced on page thirteen, and women should subscribe and receive our free patterns in all the new fall and winter styles, as advertised on page fifteen of this paper.

Her Postscript.

"Bob, dear, I wish you would write a little business letter for me while you are there at your desk. You know so much better than I how to word a letter of that kind. I want to send for some samples of organdies and other summer dress goods. Will you please write the letter for me?"

Bob was obliging, and before he went downtown he handed his wife the following letter, saying as he did so:

"That is all I fetch them, I guess."

"Brown & White:

"Gentlemen:—Will you please send me some samples of organdies and other thin summer dress goods, and oblige

"Very sincerely yours,

"R. L. Brooker."

Mrs. Brooker read the letter and said to herself:

"That sounds dreadfully indefinite. I'll just add a postscript to make it a little clearer."

This is the postscript:

"My husband wrote the above letter for me, as I thought that he being a business man and accustomed to writing a great many business letters, would know better than I just how to word the letter, but he writes it somewhat hurridly, being anxious to get to his office early this morning because of a special engagement with one of his customers, and I do not think he has made it quite clear in regard to what I want. I want samples of the latest thing you have in organdies and other thin goods—goods something with rather small figures and pretty well covered that would look dressy for a summer dress for me. I expect to spend the month of August at a hotel of that kind and shall need a new dress of at least one light dress, if not two. If the samples you send are satisfactory and your prices are not too high, I may order two dress patterns. It will depend somewhat on whether the dresses which I have ordered can give me time enough to make up the two dresses, and I fear she shall not because of the demands on her time at this season. You might send samples of something in a fine lawn as well as the organdies, as I already have two white dresses I think it probable I will be more apt to order one of the organdies if the samples are satisfactory. I have a piece of mine received a large number of beautiful samples from you about a year ago, and that is how I happen to be sending to you now. I think that you would probably have sent anyhow as I know yours to be a reliable store, so we want any of last year's patterns, and I hope you will not forget to send only samples of the newest goods. I think I prefer white dotted and white, or a soft lavender and white, or even a black and white, as black and white seems to be worn a great deal this year. I should like these samples to be sent as early as I have my dressmaker engaged for the 15th and this is the 3d, so you see there is not much time to spare. Also I would like her to see the samples before I order the goods and have her suggest something in regard to the trimmings although I think that I shall have the goods made rather simply, for real handsome organdie does not require a great deal of trimming. In fact, too much trimming is apt to spoil the effect of the goods itself. So, kindly send samples and she can give me a hint like them I will be almost sure to send for a dress pattern, although they have some really handsome goods here and I would not feel like obligating myself to ordering no matter how pretty they were, but at once and be sure and send samples of your newest patterns.

"R. L. B."

Gen. Grant's Joke.

Elliot M. Miller, a civil engineer of New Orleans, has been dead for 21 years. Grant made his father, Chaplain Miller, a present.

It was one of the Chaplain's duties to receive the boxes sent to the care of Gen. Grant's staff. Whenever the mail was late he was arraigned by the commander as to the cause of the delay, time of probable arrival, etc. On one occasion, when the post was unusually late, he was asked for the fear of losing him temper, attached the following notice to the door of his stateroom:

"The Chaplain does not know when the mail will arrive."

Shortly afterwards Gen. Grant, passing the Chaplain's quarters, noticed the sign. He knocked, and Chaplain Miller was invited slowly on his way. Coming out of his tent a few moments later, Chaplain Miller was horrified to read:

"The Chaplain does not know when the mail will arrive and he doesn't give a damn.—Harper's Weekly.

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San Francisco Story.

An amusing anecdote is going the rounds of San Francisco at the expense of one of the employes of the firm of Baker & Hamilton. Let us call him Smith.

Smith lost his home in the great fire and the hospitable head of the firm of Baker & Hamilton offered him shelter under his own roof, which happened to be in the Western Addition beyond the ravages of the flames. Although a very wealthy man, Mr. Baker was unable to procure drinking water during the first few days after the fire. So he employed two men and a boy with buckets to pack water all the way from an artesian well in the Richmond district, two miles away. The only large receptacle in the house was the porcelain bathtub, which was accordingly scrubbed and washed and scoured and scoured and washed and scrubbed, and the precious water was thereinstored. It took two days to fill the tub, and Mr. Baker paid accordingly.

On the first morning after his arrival Mr. Baker's guest was late in appearing for breakfast. Mr. Baker sent a servant to call him. The servant returned with a frightened look.

"Did you call Mr. Smith?" said the master.

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"He's not in his room, sir."

"Where is he, then," said Mr. Baker.

"He's taking a bath, sir!"

The consternation of the house of Baker can be better imagined than expressed.

An Imported Chaser

In South Africa candles are used for lighting purposes in the homes, and when a young Boer maiden has gentlemen visitors the mother sticks a pin in the candle, and when it has burned to the pin the callers understand that it is time for their departure.

Mrs. Early, a society matron of Washington, recently made a visit to the Transvaal, and was so impressed with the custom of the Boers that she determined to introduce it into her own home. Consequently the electric lights were removed and candles substituted in the drawing room.

Mr. Staylate, a frequent though not always welcome caller, was one of the first visitors to call after the inauguration of the new custom. He witnessed the placing of the pin in the candle by Mrs. Early, and after she had gone ventured to inquire:

"Why, Miss Early, does you mother stick a pin in the candle?"

"Oh," responded the young woman with an air of apparent innocence, "mother learned that in South Africa as a way of sending home the Boers."

Burglars who raid a dressmaker's establishment may be train robbers.

Any fool can write poetry, but it takes a genius to fool an editor with it.

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REMEMBER, to avoid mistakes, you must give the number of the Pattern wanted. Do not fail to give bust measure for waist, or waist measure if skirt is desired. Unless you do as here stated we will not know what to send you.

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5531 BLOUSE SHIRT AND OVERALLS FOR CHRISTMAS BEAR 12, 14, AND 20 INCHES LONG

5518 CHRISTMAS BEAR, 12, 14, 20 INCHES HIGH, MAKE OF PLUSH OR CLOTH

5453 MEN'S COAT SHIRT 34 TO 44 BREAST

5514 CIRCULAR DRAWERS 24 TO 34 WAIST

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5496 SEVEN GORED MILT PLAITED SKIRT 22 TO 30 WAIST

5444 MISSES EIGHT GORED SKIRT 14 AND 16 YEARS

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Turkish shoes, like Japanese shoes, are purposely made so loose fitting as to be easily slipped on and off.

For every time a Turkish boy or girl enters the house or shop, a mosque or the school building, he must doff his street shoes and don a sort of toe slipper made of wood or leather.

Isn't it a queer custom? But they think us quite as queer to take off our hats and keep on our shoes. They never think of removing their hats.

The shoe shops of Constantinople consist of a sort of platform two or three feet high and not much over ten feet wide, covered with carpet, or a mat, with cushions to sit on and a little cubbyhole behind—that is all. The shopkeeper sits cross-legged on his cushion, smoking his Turkish pipe. His customer sits on a chair outside and inspects the great variety of shoes that are on display—long soldier boots, wooden patterns for the bath, red shoes for Armenians, blue shoes for Greeks, black shoes for Jews, slippers made of fur, silk, velvet and brocade, embroidered slippers, gold and pearl-spangled shoes, etc., etc.

When he has made his choice he points to the shoes he wants, and the shopkeeper leisurely reaches for them. He is in no hurry to sell.

A Riddle.

What is the difference between a brewer and a fiend? One buys and the other takes hops.

Didn't Want to.

Mamma—Mamie, don't!

Mamie—Oh, please don't make me don't mamma!

Decorate Your Home

The Editor Tells You Today of an Opportunity to Beautify Your Home Free of Charge

Every lady, rich or poor, likes to have a pretty home.

Of course you want nice furniture and pretty decorations in *your* house and as nice as any of your neighbors have.

Sometimes it is a pretty hard pull to keep up with the richer people and yet have that air of culture and refinement about the home of which every woman is proud.

But when you can get beautiful decorations and get them free—just for doing somebody a friendly turn without even any real work—then it's your loss, Madam, if you neglect this opportunity.

A Wonderful Liberal Offer

And just because I know that the readers of my paper will take advantage of this opportunity, I am particularly glad to tell my subscribers of a most honest and wonderfully liberal offer. Look on this page at the magnificent dinner set with the

"SAVED"—Beautiful free picture.

initials in gold. Mr. Geo. Clark, publisher of the famous "High-Art Pictures," tells me that he will give every one of my lady readers one of these magnificent dinner sets absolutely free if she only helps him with a little recommendation of his pictures. As you see, Mr. Clark does not want you to do any canvassing.

Read on this page where it says in big black type, "Here is the Offer." I can *guarantee* you that Mr. Clark's offer is exactly as represented and I am proud that he has selected the readers of this paper, and shows his confidence in the honesty of my subscribers in making this offer here.

Two Pictures Free Anyway

You will also see that even if you do not succeed in carrying out the conditions of Mr. Clark's offer, he wants you to keep two of his famous pictures absolutely free just because you have made an honest effort.

I would like to feel that every one of my subscribers will get not only the two free pictures but also the beautiful dinner set.

Just imagine how your dining room will look with the elegant Parisian dinner set and the highart pictures hanging on the wall.

I have several of Mr. Clark's pictures in my home now and they are certainly very, very beautiful pictures. The way they are printed here I cannot begin to show you how beautiful they look in their many splendid colors. These pictures are real works of art, fit for the finest residence, 16x20 inches. What is more they come ready to hang on the wall, for every picture is finished with a lithograph scroll and frame. While lithograph gold frame, ready for wall, has been received from Mr. Clark.

"NATURE'S GOODIES"—Also free.

And I hope that every lady reader of this paper will *sign the free coupon* and send for Mr. Clark's high-art pictures today.

Wonderful Monogram Dinner Set Offer

This is positively the most wonderful, most liberal and most generous offer ever made on a dinner set or on any other premium.

***The Editor of this paper certifies** that every statement is the truthful, reliable, honest statement of a very large and thoroughly reliable firm.*

Just for a few *minutes* of your spare time—no work and *not a bit of canvassing either*—you will get this magnificent monogram dinner set absolutely *free* and, if you write at once, your initial in gold will be engraved and burnt into the china. *Remember—everything is absolutely*

FREE

This Elegant Dinner Set is a complete dinner set of 48 beautiful pieces—finest Parisian China, the kind except a great deal of money, we chose the *Parisian* China to give away; for we figure that by being very generous and liberal with you and giving you the best ever, we would at once win your friendship and recommendation, and the beautiful dinner set standing on 2 pedestals received by all your neighbors—the best dinner set in town—ought to prove a fine advertisement for our proposition. As you see from the picture every piece of the dinner set is decorated with the modern high art, and beautiful gold initial of your name (except cups and saucers) with your initial on *very gold* free of charge. *Read what the Editor says* in the first column of this page. This is no jay or small size dinner set, but everyone of the 48 pieces is of full size. The 12 piece set: Six large size 9-inch plates, six smaller size 7-inch dessert plates, six large size cups, six saucers, six sauce or fruit dishes, two large size vegetable dishes, no individual butter dishes, one platter, one cake plate, one bread plate, one gravy boat, one bowl. *We guarantee* that this Parisian China Dinner Set is exactly as represented and exactly as shown in the picture, with rose design in colors, gold initial, and edges inlaid in gold.

HERE is the Offer:

Send no money. Just mail the coupon at the bottom of this page. You will then get 24 famous high-art pictures, richly colored, 16 x 20 inches, complete with facsimile lithographed gold scroll frames, for you to keep—a total of 26 pictures. The two extra pictures hang up in your home. Invite your friends to see your pictures, and whenever a friend calls hand her one of the other 24 pictures at only 25c each. By giving away the 24 pictures at only 25c each you will take in $6.00. Send us the $6.00 and we will send you the aristocratic 42-piece monogram dinner set free.

As soon as people see the pictures decorating the walls of your rooms they will be eager to get a similar picture. But if for any reason you should not succeed, we will pay you for the number of pictures you distributed and besides we want you to keep the two extra pictures anyway, just for having made an honest effort. The art pictures are fully described by the editor in the first column of this page.

Mayor Grosse's wife writes us as follows:

"I received your beautiful monogram dinner set with initial in gold and it is certainly beautiful. The china here do not carry anything like it. It is so artistic and elegant.

"Our dining room with the new set of dishes looks twice as good as before.

"I want to thank you also for the two extra pictures you allowed me to keep.

"I shall always be glad to recommend you for fairness, promptness and generosity."

Sincerely yours,

MRS. MARTIN W. GROSSE.

Harlem, Ill., October 9, 1901.

Dining room of Mayor Grosse, of Harlem, Ill., whose wife earned the beautiful monogram dinner set and also the free pictures. *(From photograph by Orville Hurl, All rights reserved.)*

Cultured and refined people appreciate the value of this offer. They know that this is no ordinary premium offer. We have thousands of letters like Mrs. Grosse's and when you send us the coupon we will send you our mammoth circular of testimonials and one thousand references.

Read This—Important!

Free Coupon

HERE is the Coupon for you to sign right now.

You need not bother with a letter—just write your name and address plainly on the coupon and mail in an envelope. You will then get by return mail a magnificent colored circular picturing and fully describing our 42-piece Monogram Dinner Set; you will also get the mammoth testimonial sheet and a letter telling you just what to do. At the same time you will also get the pictures so you can distribute them at once.

REMEMBER! Everybody gets two 16x20 inch high-art pictures free anyway, just for making an honest effort. Sign this coupon and get the wonderfully liberal offer *before anybody else gets it in your town.* Don't delay — sign the coupon now.

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